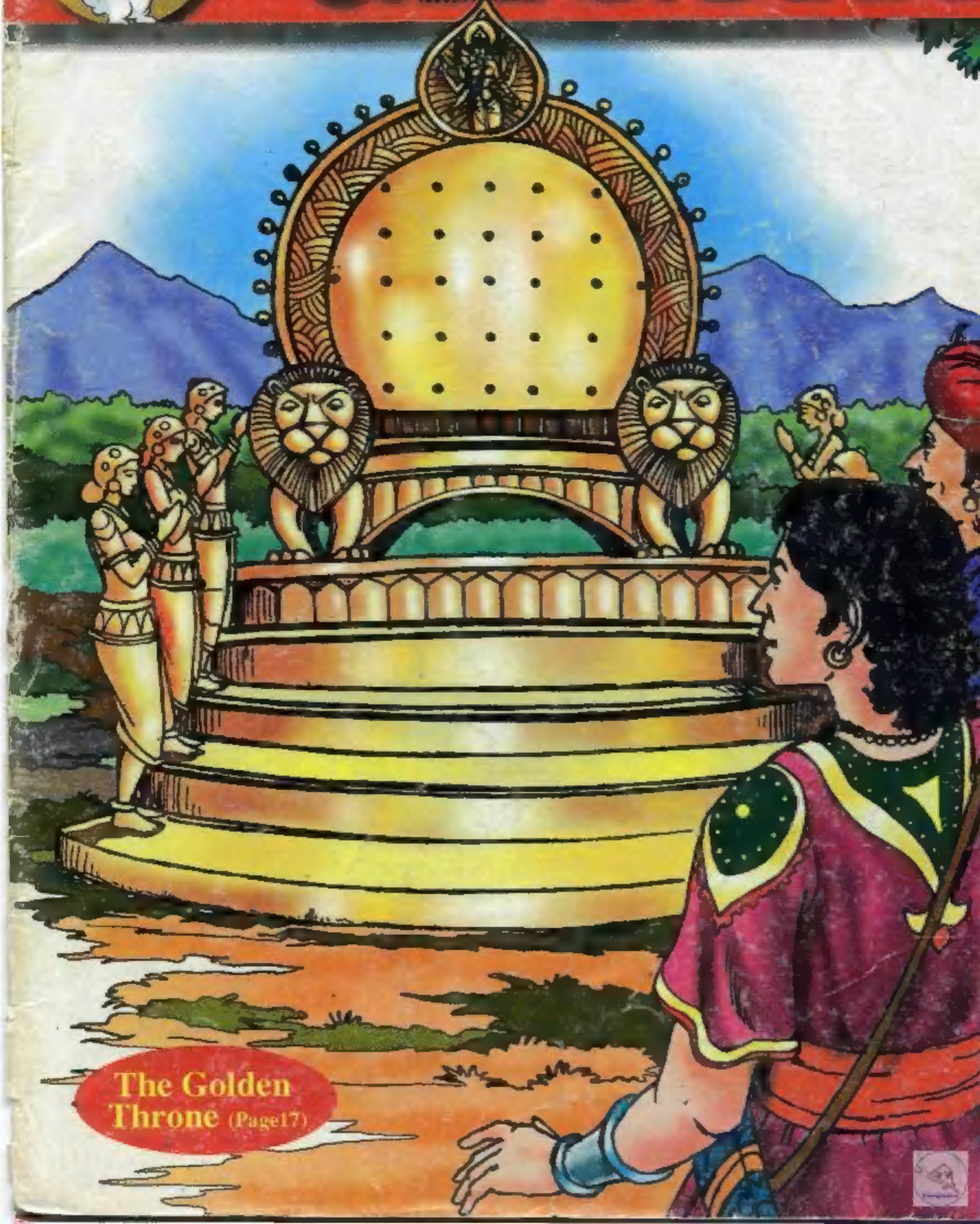




April 2000-Rs.1

CHANDAMAMA



The Golden
Throne (Page17)



BOURBON

JIM JAM

ORANGE

PINEAPPLE

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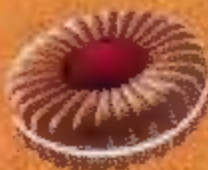
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PINEAPPLE

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ELAICHI

It's time for Cream Treat.



Don't ask for cream biscuits, ask for Cream Treat.

CHANDAMAMA

Vol. 30

April 2000

No. 4

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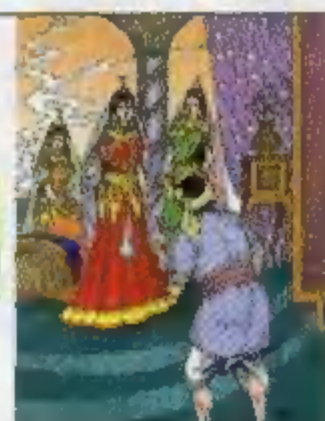


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The Golden Throne

The Three Boons



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IMPORTANCE OF MOTHER-TONGUE

The UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization) has declared that the 21st of February, every year, will be observed as the "Mother Language Day". It was on this day, way back in 1952, that several men and women sacrificed their lives in Dacca and at some nearby places, rising against the imposition of Urdu on them. We should remember that Dacca was then the capital of East Bengal which was a province of Pakistan and was known as East Pakistan. The then Pakistani Prime Minister, Nazeemuddin, decided that Urdu alone should be the language of the state, and Bengali would have no official status.

Educationists and psychologists say that a good knowledge of one's mother-tongue is essential for the proper development of one's mind. We urge our readers never to neglect their mother-tongue and appeal to all parents to see that their children received necessary lessons in their mother-tongue.

The UNESCO says that the neglect of the mother-tongue may result in the disappearance of some 6,000 languages in the next twenty years. That will deprive the world of varieties and humanity will be the poorer. This must not happen.



NEWS FLASH

CANADA SHOWS THE WAY

Last month you were informed that by smoking one cigarette, one loses 11 minutes of one's longevity. Canada proposes to compel the cigarette manufacturers to print on the packets, prominently in colour, pictures of cancerous lungs and diseased mouths –



to scare away the would-be smokers. Other countries, too, may do so. But why wait for such pictorial threats? Why not begin discouraging the smokers among our friends right away?

AND AN OFFICER SHOWS THE WAY

It was a morning, like any other morning, at the Jaiprakash Hospital in Bhopal, the capital of Madhya Pradesh. The sun had just begun to shine on the doctors, patients, buildings, vehicles – and on the heaps of filth on the campus.

But who were the two persons – a man and a lady – who were sweeping

the place? They did not appear to be regular sweepers!

Well, they were Shri Padmavir Singh, Director of the Academy for Training Administrators (a senior IAS officer) and his wife.

The trainees of the Academy joined the couple soon and so did the doctors! The filth accumulated over a long time disappeared in a few hours.



Indeed, how much could we achieve if only we do not wait for others to do what we could have done ourselves! What we need is a love for our land, its people, and a little humility. Shri Singh exemplified these qualities.

BACK TO THE MOMENT OF BIG BANG



A micromirror constructed at one of the national laboratories in the U.S.A. is expected to capture, through its extremely sensitive system, the earliest planets created through the Big Bang which marked the origin of the universe.



A PEEP INTO OUR READERS' MIND

This is the FIFTH issue in your hands since *Chandamama* was re-launched in December 1999. We have no doubt you have enjoyed reading the previous four issues. And you might have noticed that while the magazine has retained the flavour for which

it is famous for the last 50+ years, it has undergone a lot of changes in content and upped its layout and design and illustrations – not to speak of the better quality paper. We have tried to make each issue a shade better than the previous one. Of course, the several letters that we received in the last hundred days have proved that the improvements have not gone unnoticed. We do not wish to rest on our oars, but feel that more improvements have to be guided by what our readers want to see included in the magazine, also what they sincerely feel could be dropped for alternative items. Would you not open up your minds for our sake? We would like each one of you to answer the questions given below, cut out the sheet where it is indicated, and mail it to us as quickly as possible. You will see, we have made the exercise very simple. In most cases, you have only to put a tick mark (✓) in the appropriate squares. Here we go!

- I. Issues come to me ☐ through subscription
I buy the issues ☐ from the newspaper boy
I buy the issues ☐ from a news stand
I borrow the issues ☐ from a friend/library

II. I also read regularly/occasionally

☐ Comics ☐ Story Books ☐ Other children's magazines.....(Identify by name)

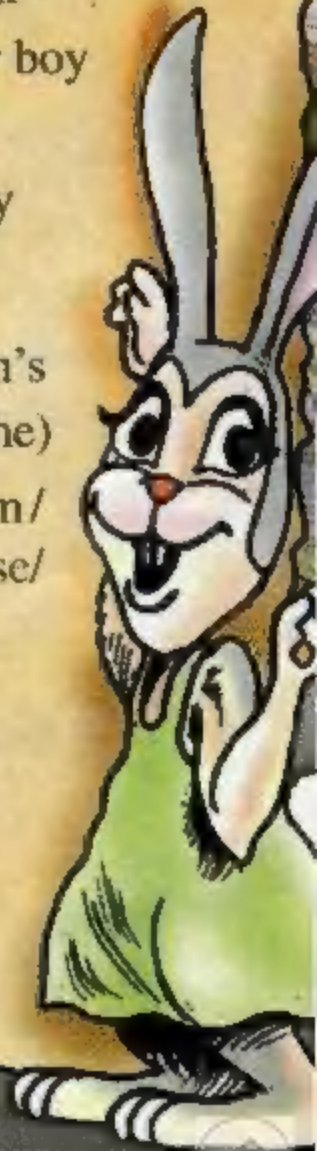
- III. I read the magazine in English / Telugu / Tamil / Malayalam / Kannada / Hindi / Marathi / Gujarati / Bengali / Assamese / Oriya / Sanskrit.

(*Underline the language of your choice*)

- IV. In the last four months, I read

☐ 4 issues ☐ 3 issues
☐ 2 issues ☐ 1 issue

Cutout on the dotted line



V. I would rate the features as follows :

- | | | |
|--|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Serial story | <input type="checkbox"/> Mythology | <input type="checkbox"/> Vikram-Vetala tale |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Tales from many lands | | <input type="checkbox"/> Other stories |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Unsolved mysteries | <input type="checkbox"/> Saga of India | <input type="checkbox"/> Biography |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Newsflash | <input type="checkbox"/> India, Then and Now | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Discovery of India Quiz | | <input type="checkbox"/> Puzzles / contests |
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| <input type="checkbox"/> Let us know | <input type="checkbox"/> Story of Rivers | |

(Show your preferences by serially numbering the squares 1 to 16)

VI. I would like *Chandamama* to include the following features :
(in the order of priority)

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|----------|---------|
| i..... | iv..... |
| ii. | v..... |
| iii..... | vi..... |

VII. I would like the cover picture to depict :

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VIII. I feel the price of Rs. 10 for a copy is ☐ too high ☐ affordable
☐ may be reduced (by using cheaper paper)

IX. i) I am a subscriber ii) I want to become a subscriber

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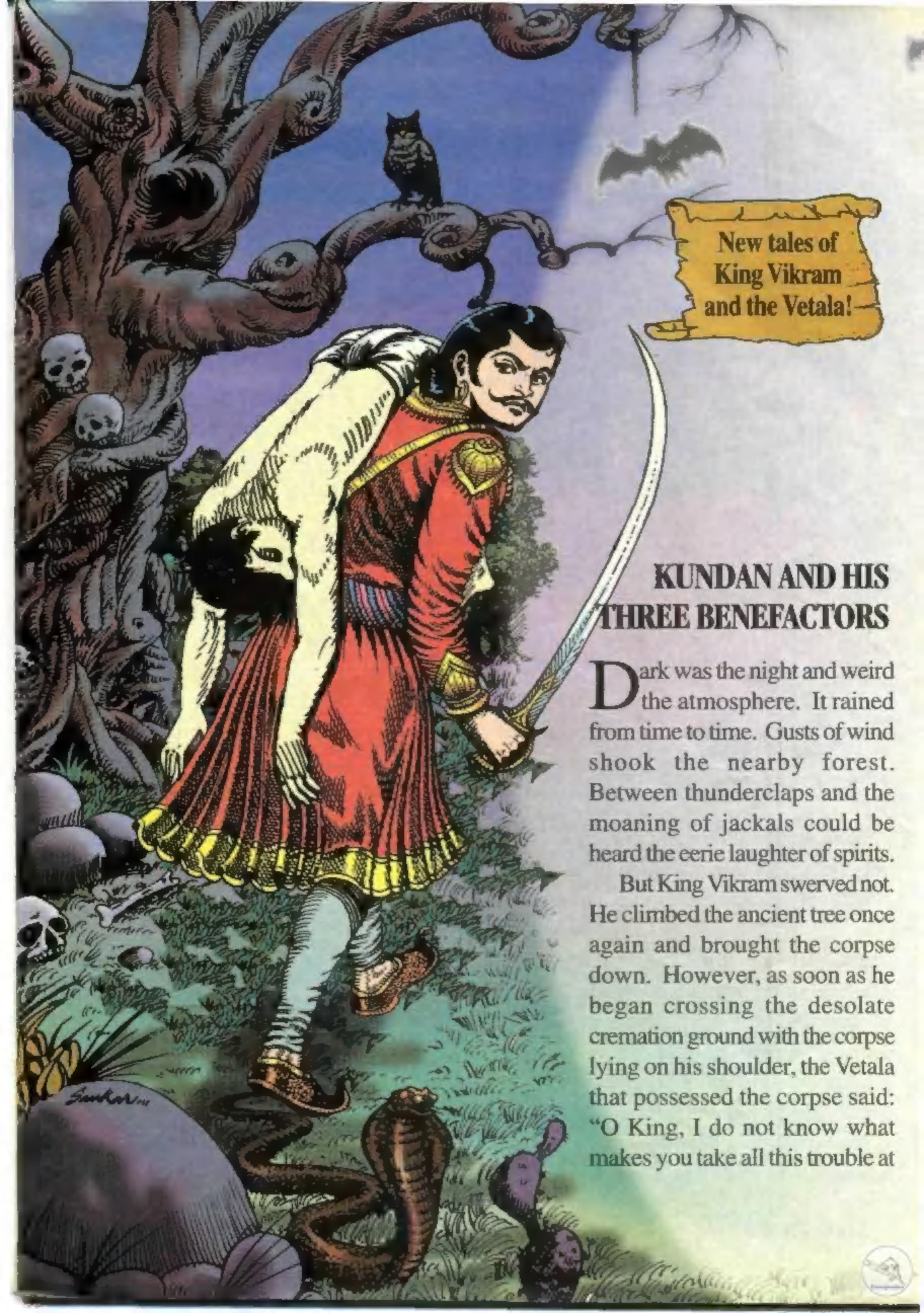
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iii) I go to school ☐ by my bike ☐ by school bus ☐ by city bus
☐ by my parent's vehicle

iv) I get pocket money ☐ less than Rs. 100 ☐ more than Rs. 100

Parent's Signature

Signature



New tales of
King Vikram
and the Vetala!

KUNDAN AND HIS THREE BENEFACTORS

Dark was the night and weird the atmosphere. It rained from time to time. Gusts of wind shook the nearby forest. Between thunderclaps and the moaning of jackals could be heard the eerie laughter of spirits.

But King Vikram swerved not. He climbed the ancient tree once again and brought the corpse down. However, as soon as he began crossing the desolate cremation ground with the corpse lying on his shoulder, the Vetala that possessed the corpse said: "O King, I do not know what makes you take all this trouble at



this unearthly hour. Who has inspired you to do this? What is his motive? Should he achieve his purpose through you? Are you sure that he'll remain grateful to you? There are instances of people repaying their benefactors with ingratitude rather than with gratitude. Let me tell you the story of Kundan. Pay attention to my narration. That should bring you some relief."

The Vampire went on:

Kundan was a farmer's son. His father, even though poor, tried to educate him. But Kundan had no interest in formal studies. He spent his time playing with other boys or helping the villagers in odd jobs. He was extremely witty and at the same time

kind-hearted. He was loved by all.

One day, he and some boys were playing in the street, with a small ball. It so happened that Ram Shastri, a renowned scholar, was passing by. When Kundan threw the ball to one of his playmates, by chance it hit Shastri – and left a dark stain on his shawl.

"Who did this? Come out and stand before me!" Shastri shouted.

Barring Kundan all the boys ran away. Kundan owned up his mistake without any sign of fear.

"You seem to be not only naughty, but fearless!" observed Shastri.

"Does anybody fear the moon?" said Kundan.

"Why do you look upon me as the moon? Why not as the sun?" asked Shastri, feeling quite intrigued.

"Sir, nobody can look at the sun. That's why nobody can see any marks on its face. But I can see the stain on your shawl – just as we can see black spots on the moon!" said Kundan in reply.

"My boy, this brown patch was made by you! What about that?" demanded Shastri.

"Sir, I compared you with the moon not on account of the patch alone but, like the moon bestowing on us its loving light, you will also bestow on me your compassion!" said Kundan.

Shastri was surprised as well as deeply impressed by Kundan.



"Well, boy, if you so wish, you can come to me for an hour or two every day. I will be happy to impart to you the light of knowledge," he proposed.

Kundan bowed to him and agreed to become his student. Shastri taught him philosophy and the scriptures – subjects which were not taught at school. Being intelligent, Kundan learnt every subject very fast. His guru was amazed.

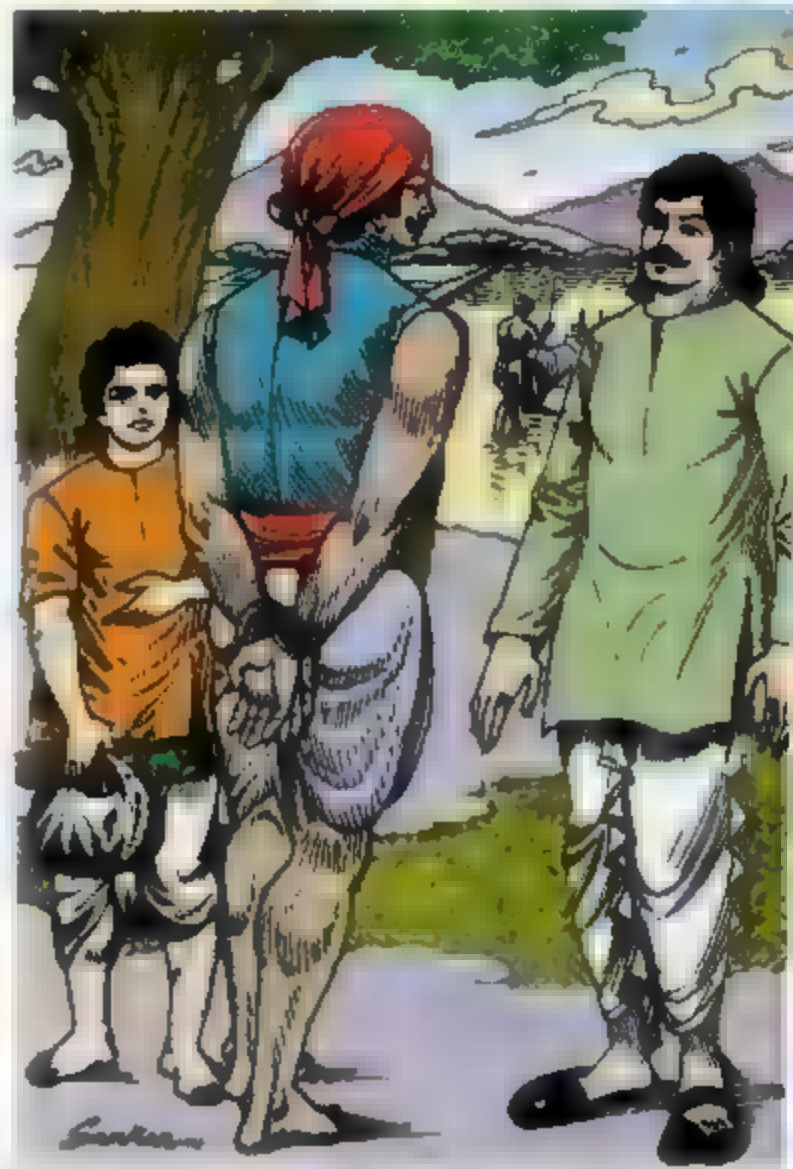
One day, Kundan was on his way to the fields carrying lunch for his father. He saw a ferocious looking man, holding a dagger. He was about to pounce on a gentleman. Kundan gave the ruffian such a sudden blow that the dagger fell off his hand. In the twinkling of an eye Kundan gave his ■■■ a terrible twist and tied him with a rope he was carrying for his father's bullocks.

Soon some villagers gathered there. They took hold of the ruffian who, it turned out, was a notorious bandit. The man whom the bandit was about to attack was Dhanagupta, ■ wealthy nobleman.

"You saved my life, young man. What can I do for you?" he gratefully asked Kundan.

"Thank you, sir, I will come to you whenever I'm in need of something," replied Kundan.

The village chieftain was a gymnast. He was also well-versed in wrestling, archery, and fencing. He summoned



Kundan. "I was looking for a deserving young man whom I could teach my skills. I'm sure, you're the one who deserves to learn whatever I know. In you our village can find an able protector."

Kundan accepted the offer gratefully and became the chieftain's student. He mastered the different and difficult skills with unusual rapidity.

One day, the king's herald passed by the village making an interesting announcement. The king proposed to hold two competitions – one in scriptural knowledge and the other in martial arts. But any participant had to deposit thousand coins which he might forfeit if he did not show at least some



merit in the contests. One who stood first in a contest was to win a fabulous reward.

Kundan's friends urged him to participate in both the contests. But Kundan had no money! When Dhanagupta heard this, he called Kundan and gave him two thousand coins.

"Kundan, I wish you luck. You need not return me this amount even if you win in any of the contests. But I'll ask of you something else. Will you act accordingly?" Dhanagupta said.

"Sir, I shall meet your demand if that is not beyond my capability," said Kundan.

Dhanagupta was pleased.

Kundan left for the capital. He enrolled himself as a participant in both the contests. In fact, he was the only candidate to do so. Some of the courtiers who were organising the events made fun of him behind his back. Nobody, according to them, could be an expert in both the scriptures as well as the martial arts, two disciplines far removed from each other.

But such people were made to eat their words when Kundan stood first in the two contests. The king was delighted. He then told Kundan, "Young man, I had a desire to give away my daughter in marriage to someone truly meritorious and not to someone whose only merit would be that he is a prince. I propose your marriage with the princess. That would mean your succeeding me to the throne since I've no son to do so."

Kundan had seen the princess. He also had heard that she was a highly cultured girl. There was no reason for him to refuse the proposal.

The very next day Dhanagupta, who was on a visit to the capital, met Kundan and proposed his daughter's marriage with him.

"But that's not possible, sir," said Kundan, returning the money the man had given him to take part in the competitions.

Soon, his marriage with the princess was formally announced. Kundan

invited all his well-wishers, including Ram Shastri and his village chieftain. The two were put up at the royal guest house. Kundan met Shastri and offered him a huge sum of money as *gurudakshina* – honorarium for ■ teacher.

“Kundan, you must make me the chief scholar of the royal court,” said Shastri.

“Sir, that may not be possible, I’m sorry,” Kundan told a disappointed Shastri.

Next he met the chieftain of his village and gave him an equally large amount as his honorarium.

“But, Kundan, I would like you to make me the Commander of the army!” said the chieftain.

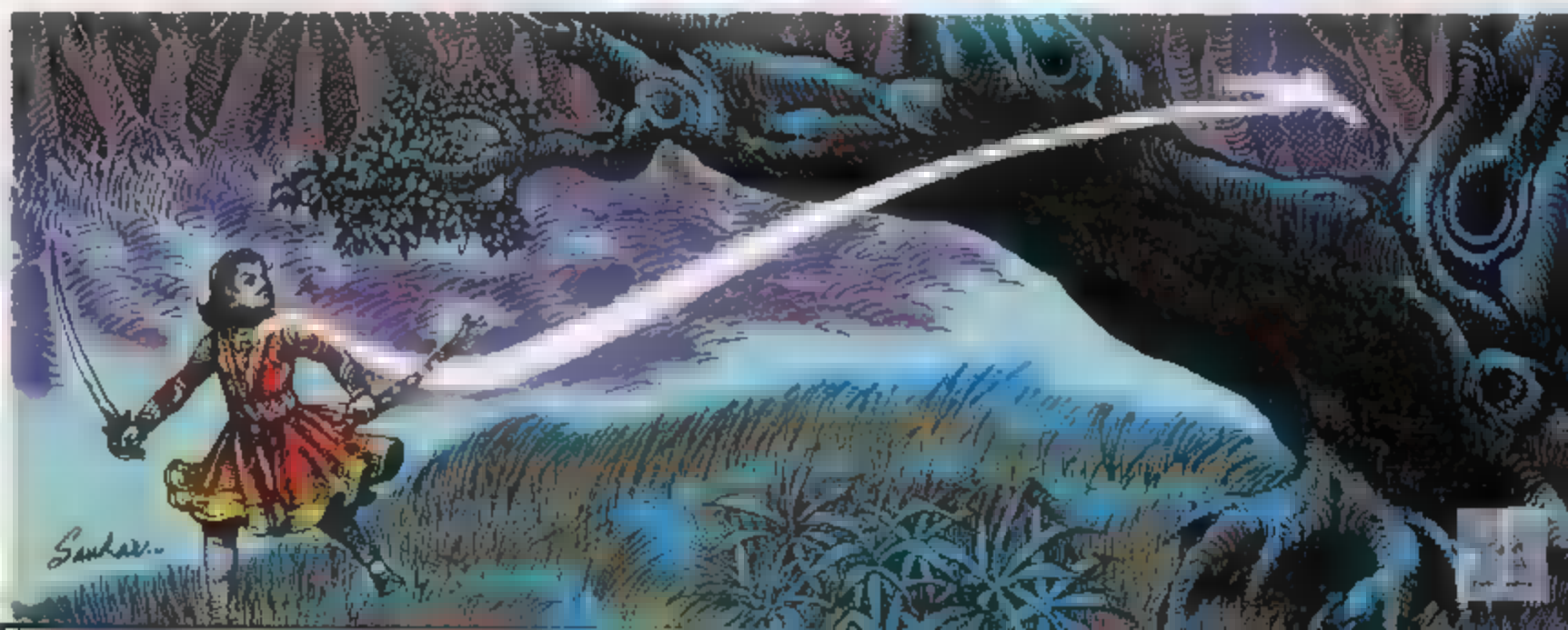
“I’m sorry, that wouldn’t be possible,” said Kundan, leaving his teacher of martial arts a disappointed man.

The Vetala paused for a moment and then, in ■ challenging tone, demanded of King Vikram: “O King, do you know of any man more ungrateful than Kundan? How could he refuse the

requests of the three people without whose help he could not have dreamt of becoming what he became? Answer me if you can. Should you keep silent despite your being aware of the answer, your head would roll off your neck.”

King Vikram answered at once: “Kundan was not at all ungrateful. At the earliest opportunity, he tried to pay back his debt to each one of them. If he did not marry Dhanagupta’s daughter, it was because he had never promised to do so and had already accepted the king’s proposal to marry the princess. If he refused to oblige Shastri, that was because there was a process by which one achieved the position of the chief scholar of the court. Kundan did not wish to violate that process. And, to make the chieftain the army commander would not have ensured the security of the kingdom. No personal favour should play any role in such matters. Kundan acted as a man of principle.”

No sooner had the king concluded his answer than the Vetala, along with the corpse, gave him the slip.





A GIFT FOR THE QUEEN

A sage camped ■ the foot of a hill. Those who knew that he was a great soul went to meet him and sought his blessings.

By and by more and more people went to him out of sheer curiosity. "If the sage truly has some spiritual power, maybe his blessings would benefit us. Why not visit him and bow to him? We are not losing anything!"—was their attitude.

The queen of the land, too, heard about the sage. Her mind was beset with several problems. Once she saw the sage passing by the palace, through her window on the top floor of her apartments. There was a serenity on the

sage's face that impressed her. She told her chief maid that she would like to meet him.

Next day, the queen's chief maid met the sage and conveyed to him the queen's desire to see him. "She is welcome," said the sage.

In the afternoon, riding her be-decked palanquin, the queen arrived at the foot of the hills and walked into the sage's presence.

She prostrated herself before him. When she lifted her head, the sage held out something for her. She spread her palms and the sage placed on them ■ gold necklace.

The queen was surprised. She had



A wealthy man who does neither spend his wealth on others nor enjoy it himself, is like a scarecrow which guards the crop for others to take it away.

- Subhasita Ratnabhandagaram

expected a flower or a fruit or a bit of the sacred ash or a little sandalwood paste. She did not look for any costly present from a hermit. She hesitated; her palms continued to remain unfolded.

"My daughter, are you not a queen? Should I not give you something which befits your status?" the sage said with a smile, as if he had already understood what intrigued the queen.

"But, Baba, I had no desire for receiving a costly gift from you!" mumbled the queen.

"What then would you like to have?" asked the sage.

The queen had not expected the question. She did not know what to say. "But I have a large number of priceless necklaces!" she muttered.

"That's only natural. Tell me, what

would please you?" the sage asked affectionately.

"Give me something that would help me find God," she said.

"My daughter, if you are looking for God, this necklace should one day give you the clue to that. But continue in your quest. Do not give it up," advised the sage.

The queen was happy. "Baba, should I wear it like any other necklace? Does it require any special attention?" she asked.

"This does require some attention—not very special. Just take it out before you fall sleep and keep it under your pillow. In the morning wear it again, while reminding yourself of your quest," instructed the sage.

The queen took leave of the sage.



As days passed, she grew more and more fond of the necklace. There was something very charming about it. That is what she felt, though for all the others there was nothing extraordinary about it. She never forgot to take it off at night and keep it under the pillow. The first thing she did in the morning was to put it on.

One morning she did not find the necklace under her pillow. She looked for it again and again—under the pillow, under the bed, and also under the bedstead. She shouted for her maids. They came rushing and they too searched for it as best as they could. But the search proved futile.

Soon the queen's younger sister was informed about the mysterious disappearance of the necklace. She knew that there was a festive function

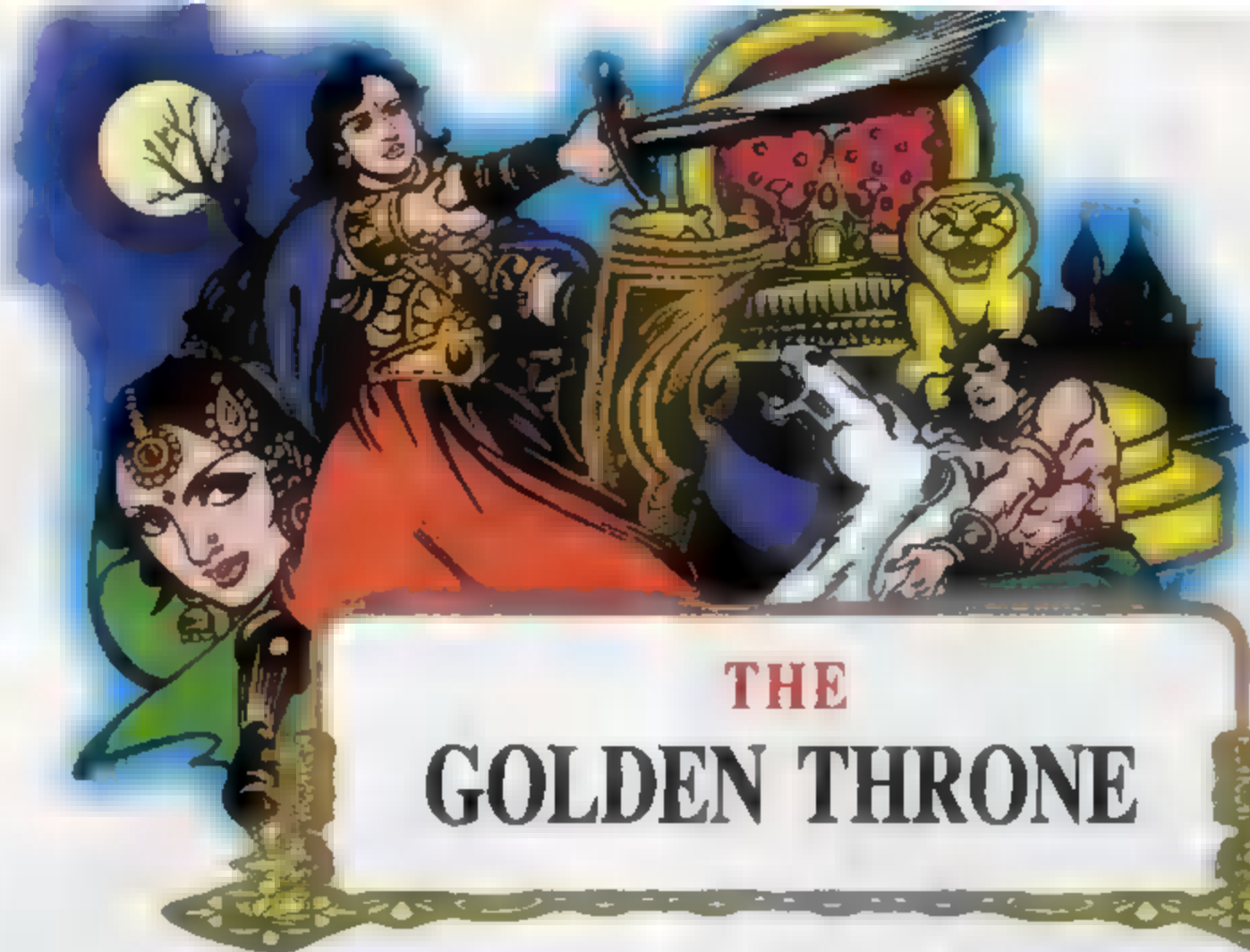
in the palace at night and the queen had retired to bed very late and very tired. She did what the maids had not dared to do. She examined her elder sister's person and then laughed aloud! Indeed, her guess was correct. The necklace was hanging around her neck! She had forgotten to take it off at night.

The queen felt greatly relieved, for that was so important to her! Suddenly, a question arose in her mind: Had this incident anything to do with the sage's assurance that the necklace would prove a clue to her quest for God?

The answer too came at once: "The necklace was with me still I was looking for it everywhere. God is within me. Must I look for him anywhere outside?"

The queen began to meditate on this revelation and felt amply rewarded.





THE GOLDEN THRONE

[The story so far: The King of Kaundinya, Sridatta, and the King of Kalindi, Madhavasena, are great friends. Sridatta's son, Vijayadatta, is to marry Srilekha, the daughter of Madhavasena. But the wicked King of Champaka, Maralabhupati, proposes not only his son Chakrabhupati's marriage with Srilekha, but an invasion of Kaundinya. He influences Madhavasena as well as the King of Kunda to join him. But Srilekha escapes to Kaundinya. King Sridatta hurriedly gets her married to Prince Vijayadatta. When Madhavasena learns this, he changes his mind. He decides to desert Maralabhupati at the right time. Meanwhile, following a prophecy, Sridatta orders digging at a spot close to the palace, under the supervision of his priest.]

Prince Vijayadatta was amazed at what their priest Sivananda had to say and at the appearance of the strange serpent. As a sign of his gathering courage, his hand instantly went over to the sheath of his sword.

The priest descended into the pit. He chanted a *mantra* and blew on the water he held in his cupped palms. He then sprinkled the water on the serpent.

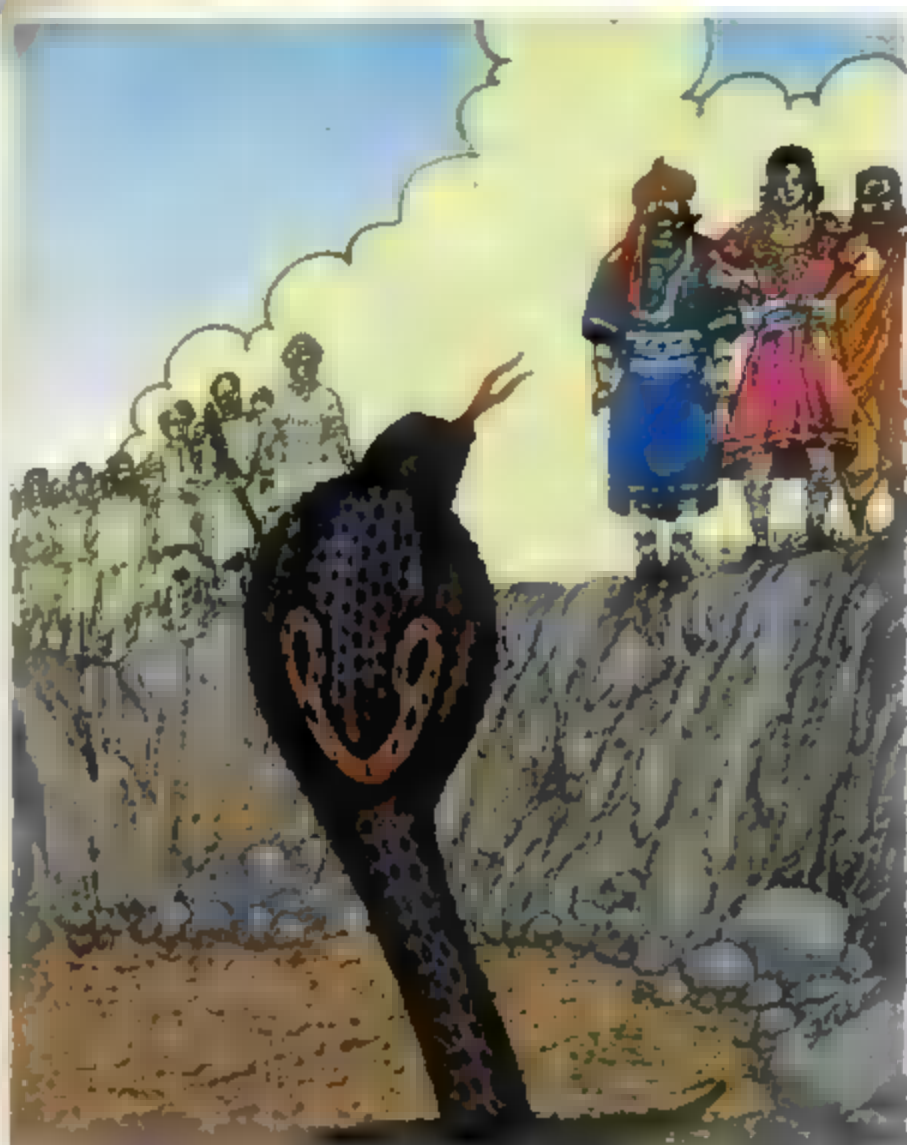
What would happen next? Would

the serpent grow furious? Would it vanish? Everybody waited with bated breath.

The serpent neither grew furious nor did it vanish. But it stopped breathing out hot air.

The priest was about to throw the holy water once again when, in an eerie voice, the serpent spoke: "O Priest, you'll achieve nothing more by throwing the water on me. I was created by a

4. THE WONDERFUL THRONE



powerful Tantrik – and for a good purpose too. He taught me a question and its answer. I'll yield only to the one who can answer the question correctly. Take it from me, you cannot tame me with your mantras."

King Sridatta and Prince Vijayadatta looked at each other. Sivananda went closer to Vijayadatta and said: "O Prince, I suggest that you take up the serpent's challenge without the slightest hesitation."

Vijayadatta bowed to his father and the priest and then descended into the pit.

"O mighty serpent, I shall try to answer your question," he said.

"That is quite daring of you," said

the serpent in response. "But listen to me first. If you answer the question to my satisfaction, I will turn into a necklace and appear around your neck. But if you fail to give the right answer, I will bite you, and nobody will be able to save you. Such is my poison. Well, I've warned you. Now it's for you to decide whether you should take the risk or not. You're free to retreat at this stage, before it's too late."

"Vijay! I think you should retreat!" cried out his father, King Sridatta, his voice betraying grave concern.

But the priest cast a meaningful look at the king and said: "I've a strong feeling that the prince would succeed in his mission. Let's not stop him."

Prince Vijayadatta heard what the priest said. A look of strong determination came over his face. He advanced towards the snake and said: "O mighty serpent, I'm ready to take the risk."

"Good. Now tell me what is meant by, throughout three and six, a king must follow the three?"

Prince Vijayadatta closed his eyes and meditated on the question for a moment. "Listen," he said, looking sharply at the serpent, "all the three times – morning, noon and evening of the day, and all the six seasons, a king must follow the rules of Truth, Righteousness, and Justice." "Excellent!" exclaimed the serpent.

"You've passed the test. Now I shall turn into a necklace for you. As long as you wear me, no kind of poison can have any effect on you. Let me tell you something more. If you dig a little more, you'll find a wonderful object. Glory to you!"

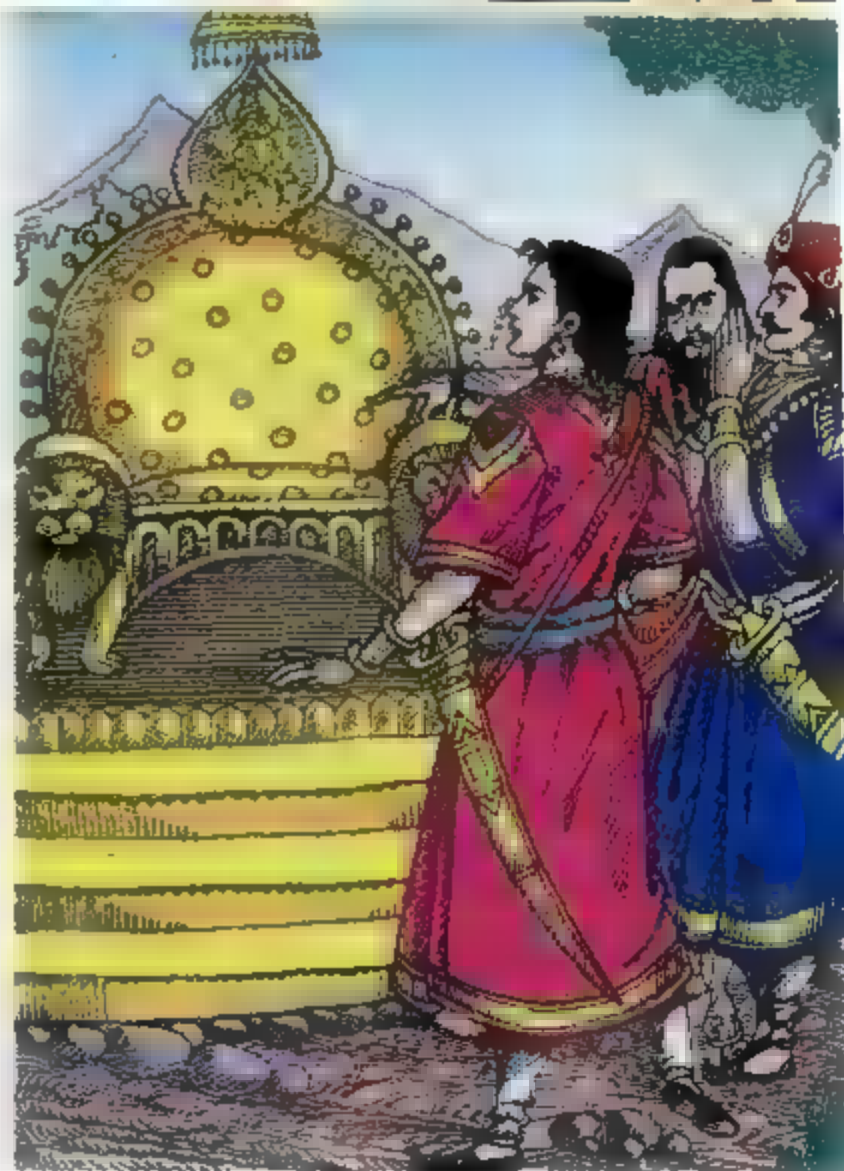
The serpent disappeared. Next moment, a crystal clear necklace fell on the prince's head and slid down to settle around his neck.

The king ordered for the digging to continue. They struck rock and it was not easy to cut through. The day wore out and night set in. A new batch of workers arrived to relieve those who were tired. With torches burning all around, they continued digging.

The king and the prince retired to the palace. Before they went away, they left instructions that they should be informed as soon as anything unusual was found.

Early in the morning, the king's chief personal attendant informed him that the priest who had reached the site had sent word to him and the prince to proceed there. Within moments both father and son, as well as Srilekha, were at the site. They were amazed to see what had emerged from the pit.

It was a huge golden throne. Despite remaining buried for long, it glittered brilliantly in the morning sun. Such was its grandeur that it would lift high the dignity of any king who sat on it.



On the top of the throne was carved the figure of the deity of the Haihaya dynasty, Gayatri Devi. At the deity's feet was a lotus, intricately carved. And what radiated a powerful white light was a diamond on the crown of the deity. At the centre of the diamond was a ruby, glowing a luminous red.

The seat of the throne was flanked by two majestic lions. Their lively eyes would inspire fear in any one who saw them.

Three steps led to the seat. Two golden female figures looking like courtesans stood at either end of each step. Their hands were folded in a gesture of welcome to the one who would sit on it. The figures were so



beautiful that it was not easy for whoever looked at them to take his eyes away from them. King Sridatta stood before the throne in silence. Hands folded, he prayed to the deity to protect his son, Vijayadatta, to whom he would dedicate the throne. Both Vijayadatta and Srilekha followed the king's example and bowed to the deity.

After making arrangements for the throne to be taken to the palace, the king, prince, and Srilekha returned to the palace.

One of the most faithful officials of the royal court, Sivimukh, who was a very clever spy, was waiting for the king. He was led into the king's

chamber. "What reports have you brought?" the king asked him. Sivimukh told him all that he had gathered:

King Maralabhupati of Champaka and Chakrabhupati, the crown-prince, were camping at Kalindi. The Prince was to marry Srilekha, the princess of Kalindi. But she had disappeared from the palace in mysterious circumstances. It was rumoured that she had left the kingdom disguised as a young man.

While the King of Kalindi, Madhavasena, appeared helpless, his royal guests felt quite humiliated. Though there was no announcement about the marriage, people had come to know about it and rumours had a field day!

However, the kings of Champak and Kalindi were determined that their plan of a joint invasion of Kaundinya must be carried out.

The army of Kunda had already gathered at Champak. The two armies might have already started advancing upon Kaundinya. The army of Kalindi would join later – on an auspicious day – on the banks of the river Kalindi. Then, they proposed to cross the river together and take Kaundinya by surprise.

As Sivimukh completed his statement, Sridatta looked a bit confused. He turned to Vijayadatta. "My son, Sivi's report is contrary to what Madhavasena had written in his

letter. Should we still trust him?"

"Father, it's quite possible that Uncle Madhavasena is trying to keep Maralabhupati in good humour. He can be otherwise cruel and violent. If Madhavasena refuses to collaborate with him, he might turn his wrath against the kingdom of Kalindi. We must remember that Maralabhupati has been able to get the army of Kunda under his command and that army, too, is waiting at Kalindi," said Vijayadatta, after giving a thought to his father's suspicion.

"You may be right," said the king. "And I pray to the Almighty that you proved right. However, we must be prepared to face the collective force of our three neighbours. Victory or defeat is in the hands of Providence."

The king had by then sent for the priest, Sivananda. He arrived, looking calm and serene as ever.

"Acharya," the king addressed the priest, "only a while ago I was dreaming of our son's coronation, while he sat on the grand throne under the gracious look of our dynasty's presiding deity, Devi Gayatri. But how fast the situation has changed!"

Giving the priest a gist of Sivimukh's report, the king added: "Instead of a festive coronation, we now have to prepare for a terrible war!"

The priest nodded and said in a firm tone: "Your Majesty, your wise plan for



the prince's coronation need not be altered because of the threat of a war. I have thoroughly examined the prince's horoscope. Till yesterday, there was a little apprehension about his safety. But today begins a new phase in his destiny. He ought to march from success to success. The iron rod he would hold would turn into a powerful weapon. Let the coronation of Prince Vijayadatta take place. To lead our army to the battlefield to protect the kingdom and the dignity of the dynasty should be his first function as the new king. My heart says that he would triumph!"

The king looked at Vijayadatta and felt that the priest had the prince's approval. He bowed to the goddess

and said: "This is all the Grace of the presiding deity of our dynasty, Gayatri Devi. Yes, I believe that my son has her blessings. I give you and him a free hand to do as you please."

"I congratulate you, my lord, for thinking and acting wisely. Surely, the prince deserves our trust and unconditional support. I've fixed the time for the prince's coronation, after consulting the almanac. It should take place four days from now, at the time of sunrise."

"We'll have the ceremony coinciding with the time the enemy prepares to attack us!" observed Vijayadatta.

It was decided to perform the coronation in a solemn and simple manner, without any pomp and show.

Preparations began for both the coronation and war. Craftsmen were engaged to polish the throne; soldiers were kept busy sharpening their swords. Four days passed like four hours. The court-hall was tastefully

decorated. Seats were placed for nobles facing the throne. Behind the rows of seats, there was place enough for the public to stand and watch the proceedings.

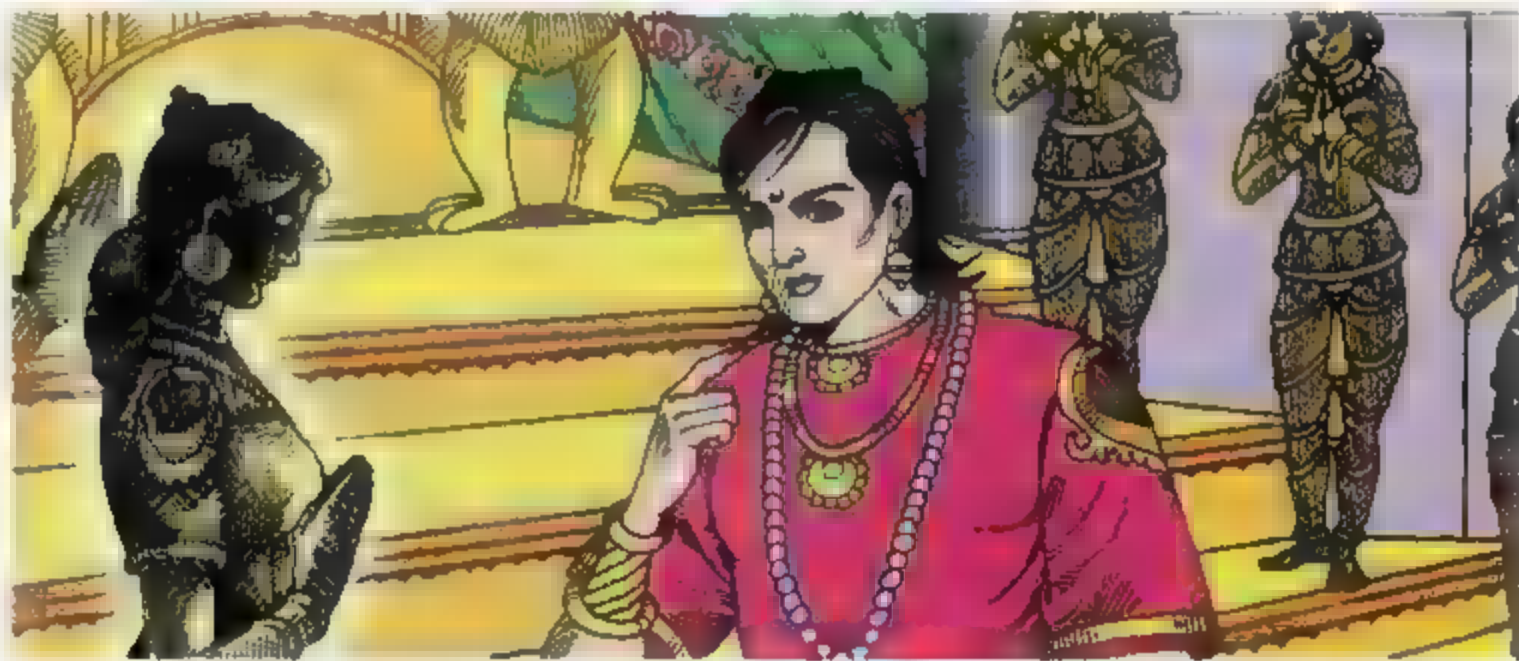
The appointed moment arrived, at last. Pundits began reciting the *Mantras*. Prince Vijayadatta and Princess Srilekha touched the feet of the king and the priest; they were then about to ascend the throne.

They had hardly set foot on the first step when a roaring voice was heard: "Vijayadatta! Stop!"

Everybody was taken aback. The king at once began praying to Goddess Gayatri. He knew that some unseen power was moulding the events. He himself had hardly any role to play.

Prince Vijayadatta and Princess Srilekha stopped. Though surprised, they did not show any sign of fear. "What should we do now?" the prince asked, looking at the priest, Sivananda.

[To continue]





THE DAY THE KINGDOM WENT WEEPING

Anything like that had never happened in the history of the small kingdom. A hundred people stood under a large tree and wept. And, who do you think these hundred people were? They were the nobles of the King's court, if you had taken a look at them from outside. But if you pushed through them, you would have had the surprise of your life. At the centre stood the little king himself crying inconsolably; at his right stood the minister and at his left the commander and, of course, behind them stood an unknown old woman, holding a letter in her hand.

Nobody could say how long this would have gone on if a young man, riding a horse, would not have arrived

there. At first, he could not understand what was going on. When he understood that everybody was weeping, he asked the first man, a courtier, the cause of his sorrow.

But the courtier was in no mood to answer. He pointed at the man next to him. When the young man made his enquiry to him, he was rather annoyed at being disturbed. However, in a suppressed tone, he said: "Don't you have your eyes to see that the king himself is weeping? How can we the nobles do otherwise if the king wept?"

The young man now understood that all the nobles were weeping because the king was weeping. He pushed through the crowd and bowed to the

king and asked: "Your Majesty, may I know what makes you shed tears?"

"My boy, you're the first man to show any concern for me. The reason for my being in this state is very strong. I saw my minister as well as the commander of my army weeping. When the minister and the commander wept, what hope has the king for his survival? I knew that my end was approaching. Hence I wept."

The young man turned to the minister: "O venerable minister, what had upset you?"

"The commander himself is standing here and weeping! What more do you need to feel upset about?" answered the minister.

"O mighty commander, may I know what inspired tears in you?" asked the young man, turning to the great warrior.

"Young man, an illiterate old woman showed me a scrap on which, she said, was written some message. She wanted me to read it for her. After many years I remembered my fond childhood wish to read and write. But I joined the then commander's service as a boy to look after his horse. He pushed me into the army when I grew up and, by and by, I became the

commander myself. I wept because I could not read the message for the woman!"

Suddenly, the old woman leaped out and hugged the young man. "O my son! So, you're here at last!"

The son disclosed that it was he who had sent a message to his grandmother informing her that he was returning home that day. He had been away doing business in a distant land and had prospered!

Thus did the mammoth weeping session come to an end. Realizing the irony of the situation or maybe to subdue his embarrassment, the king laughed. The minister and the commander laughed louder and, of course, the nobles were the loudest.





THE THREE BOONS

Ram and Subhas were neighbours. Both were young and intelligent. But Ram worked hard in his fields and earned enough to maintain his small family.

Subhas, however, was lazy and led a luxurious life. As a result, he had to borrow a lot of money. In order to clear his debts, he sold his lands. But he was rather lucky. His uncle, who died childless in a distant town, had left some money with a trust. The trust sent Subhas a fixed amount every month, while passing on a larger amount to a school and a hospital. Subhas cursed his uncle for not leaving something more for him, forgetting that the uncle might not have left anything at all for him!

Once every month Ram and Subhas went to the town to buy their requirements to last a month. They went together because it was not safe for any of them to walk alone through the forest.

Once while returning from the town,

Ram asked his friend: "Have you heard about the threat to our kingdom? The powerful neighbouring king is planning to attack us, while our king is still to come out of his bereavement at the queen's untimely death."

"What does it matter who rules the kingdom!" commented Subhas.

Ram did not say anything. After a while, he said again: "What a pity there has been no rain this season. Our crop is about to dry up!"

"What does it matter to me if the crop dries up! I've disposed off my lands!" said Subhas.

Just then a horse-drawn carriage belonging to a relative of Subhas came that way. "Subhas, if you so like, you may join me in the carriage!" shouted the relative.

"Don't mind!" said Subhas looking at Ram, accepting his relative's offer.

Ram felt sad over his neighbour's behaviour and walked fast.



He stumbled against a boulder and fell down. The bundle on his head fell down and the items lay scattered. He fainted.

When he recovered his senses, it was evening. He began collecting the items on the ground and in the process found an ivory ring under a bush. He wore it on his middle finger. Next moment, before his eyes flashed a castle. He was surprised. Had it anything to do with the ring? he wondered. When he removed the ring, the castle disappeared.

He put on the ring again and approached the castle cautiously. He stepped into a hall and, to his utter amazement, saw three beautiful damsels. He understood that they were

not human but supernatural beings, probably nymphs.

The nymphs were no less amazed on seeing Ram.

"How come you could see us?" they asked. "Did you by any chance find an ivory ring?"

"I did, indeed! And if I am lucky enough to see you, it is on account of the ring's magic powers," said Ram.

"Right now the three of us will grant you three boons, if you agree to return the ring to us," said one of the nymphs.

"I shall return the ring even without asking for a boon. Obviously the ring belongs to you," said Ram.

"Thanks. But you can have the three boons since we have already promised them to you," said the second nymph. "Our names are Swati, Udaya and Chandrika. You should utter each name seven times and ask for a boon."

Ram bowed to them. He then uttered Swati's name seven times and said: "Let our king's enemy have a change of heart so that he does not attack our kingdom."

After uttering Udaya's name, he said: "Let there be enough rain in our area to give us a good crop."

Then chanting the name of Chandrika, he said: "Let my family always remain content with whatever I can earn through my honest labour." Ram was thereafter about to take off the ring when the nymphs said: "You're indeed a selfless person. Please keep

the ring with you so that you can communicate with us in future if the need arises. Now go home and lead a happy life."

Ram gratefully bowed to them and left the place. By then darkness had enveloped the forest. He spent the night on a tree and started for home at daybreak.

Meanwhile, his wife was awfully worried when he did not return home. When she heard that Subhas had come away leaving him in the forest, she was in tears. Subhas was also a bit worried, not because he cared for Ram, but because the villagers might blame him for his selfishness. Again and again he peeped into his neighbour's house to find out if Ram had returned.

When he was back home, Ram narrated to his wife his strange experience in the forest and handed over the ring to her. "Keep it near our family deity. It is sacred," he said.

Soon there was rain. Next day, they also heard that the enemy king had appealed for a truce.

Subhas who was coming to meet him, had stopped near the window, when he overheard him. He hurried back to his wife. "You must somehow manage to steal the ivory ring. I shall meet the nymphs and obtain three boons."

The lady plucked some flowers and slowly entered Ram's house through the rear door. She guessed that Ram's wife



would be cooking.

"My sister! I've brought some flowers for you. You may offer them to Goddess Lakshmi," she said enthusiastically.

"It's so sweet of you!" responded Ram's wife. "Please leave them near the idol."

Subhas's wife did so and picked up the ring and went out and handed it over to her husband.

Subhas's mother was old and ill. She had been bedridden for long and she had listened to the conversation between her son and his wife.

"My son, please allow me to ask for a boon out of the three," she said.

"Very good," agreed Subhas.

"And I must have one boon of my

choice," said Subhas's wife.

"All right," said Subhas as he went out.

With the ring on his finger, it was easy for him to find the mysterious castle. The moment the three nymphs saw him, they understood that the fellow had somehow got the ring from Ram.

"What do you want?" they asked.

"Three boons, of course!" replied Subhas.

"You'll have them, provided you return the ring," they said.

"I also know the method to receive the boons. One must recite your names seven times each. Am I right?" he asked.

"You're right."

"Now that you have agreed to grant me three boons, I'll go home and let my mother and wife ask for one boon each along with me," he said and handed over the ring to them. The castle and the nymphs vanished as soon as he had done so.

He returned home and asked his mother to utter Swati's name seven times and asked his wife to chant Udaya's name seven times, while he himself began reciting Chandrika's name.

His mother was the first to ask for a boon. "Let me lead a healthy life for a hundred years!" At once she looked healthy and bright.

But her daughter-in-law flared up, saying: "What's this? Couldn't you ask something for our house?"

"Why are you angry with my mother?" Subhas scolded his wife. "She has got back her health. What if our house is destroyed?"

"You wouldn't mind if our neighbour has a palace filled with gold!" said his wife.

Both had just finished saying so when Subhas's house was destroyed and Ram had a palatial house filled with gold! Needless to say, their words were taken as their wishes!

In shame, Subhas and family left the village.





THE INCREDIBLE FEAT

There was a landlord who achieved nothing himself, but was very fond of listening to the glorious deeds of his ancestors. "They were great. There was nothing which they could not do," he would say proudly.

He held a sort of court and many people gathered there every day. Some came on business and some came only to please him for their future gain. Each of them would tell him tales of his father, grandfather, or great-grandfather. They would invent stories which were incredible. For example, some would say how his father had fought with a king and won; some would say how his grandfather outwitted the greatest scholar in the whole kingdom. Another flatterer even said that his grandfather's grandfather was so handsome that a nymph insisted on

marrying her!

"You have inherited that charm from that great ancestor of yours. I will not be surprised if yet another nymph decides to marry you, sir!

To all of this, he would respond thus: "That was it. There was nothing which my ancestors could not do. If somebody can tell me some deed of any of my forefathers which he could not have performed, I would give that fellow a hundred gold coins. Here's the amount," saying so, he would dangle a pouch in front of his listeners.

One day, he found nobody who could narrate any new anecdote to him. Those present had already repeated their stories and none could think of spinning any new yarn.

Just then a poor farmer came to meet the landlord with an appeal. The



landlord's clerk had imposed on him a tax of one silver coin for a certain crop he had raised. The farmer thought it unjust.

"Why do you bother about one silver coin? You can win a hundred gold coins if you know of any wonderful deed of any of my ancestors," said the landlord, though he did not hope much from the farmer.

"I can tell you something which your great-grandfather did – which nobody else could have done – not even the king or the king's father or his grandfather or his great-grandfather!" asserted the farmer.

"Is that so?" said the landlord, pleasantly surprised. "But I must find his feat to be incredible myself. Your

saying so would not do!"

"Naturally, sir, who am I to judge?" agreed the farmer.

"Now, come out with your story!" said the landlord sitting alert. So did the others.

The farmer narrated the story:

Once the landlord's great-grandfather, who was a great landlord, was on his way to a distant temple. He was accompanied by his friends, clerks, and servants. He rode on a palanquin while the others walked.

At noon, he decided to take a little rest under a huge tree. As he sat down, a passer-by told him: "Sir, there are numerous birds on this tree and they may spoil your clothes. Better move on to another spot."



One who runs after the uncertain without caring for what is certain, will lose both the certain and the uncertain.

- Panchatantra

"Must I, an illustrious landlord, care for birds?" said the great landlord and he did not budge.

As he listened to the narration, the landlord remarked: "That's quite possible; nobody could have influenced him to do anything other than what he had decided to do."

The farmer continued: But soon thereafter, a bird's dropping fell on his shirt. "Throw this shirt away and bring me a new one," said the great man.

His servants removed the shirt and put a new one on him.

A little later, another bird's dropping spoiled his shawl.

"Throw this shawl away and bring me a new one," he said. His servants obeyed him at once.

"That too was quite possible. My great-grandfather always carried with him a boxful of new clothes," commented the landlord, feeling very proud.

Next, another bird spoilt his,

magnificent slippers. He threw them away immediately and looked at his servants. They brought him a new pair of slippers.

"Ha ha!" laughed the landlord. "I know, he must have done that. He cared for no loss. After all, he was my ancestor!"

The farmer went on: A little later, another bird's dropping fell right on his head. "Throw away my head and bring me a new one!" ordered the great man.

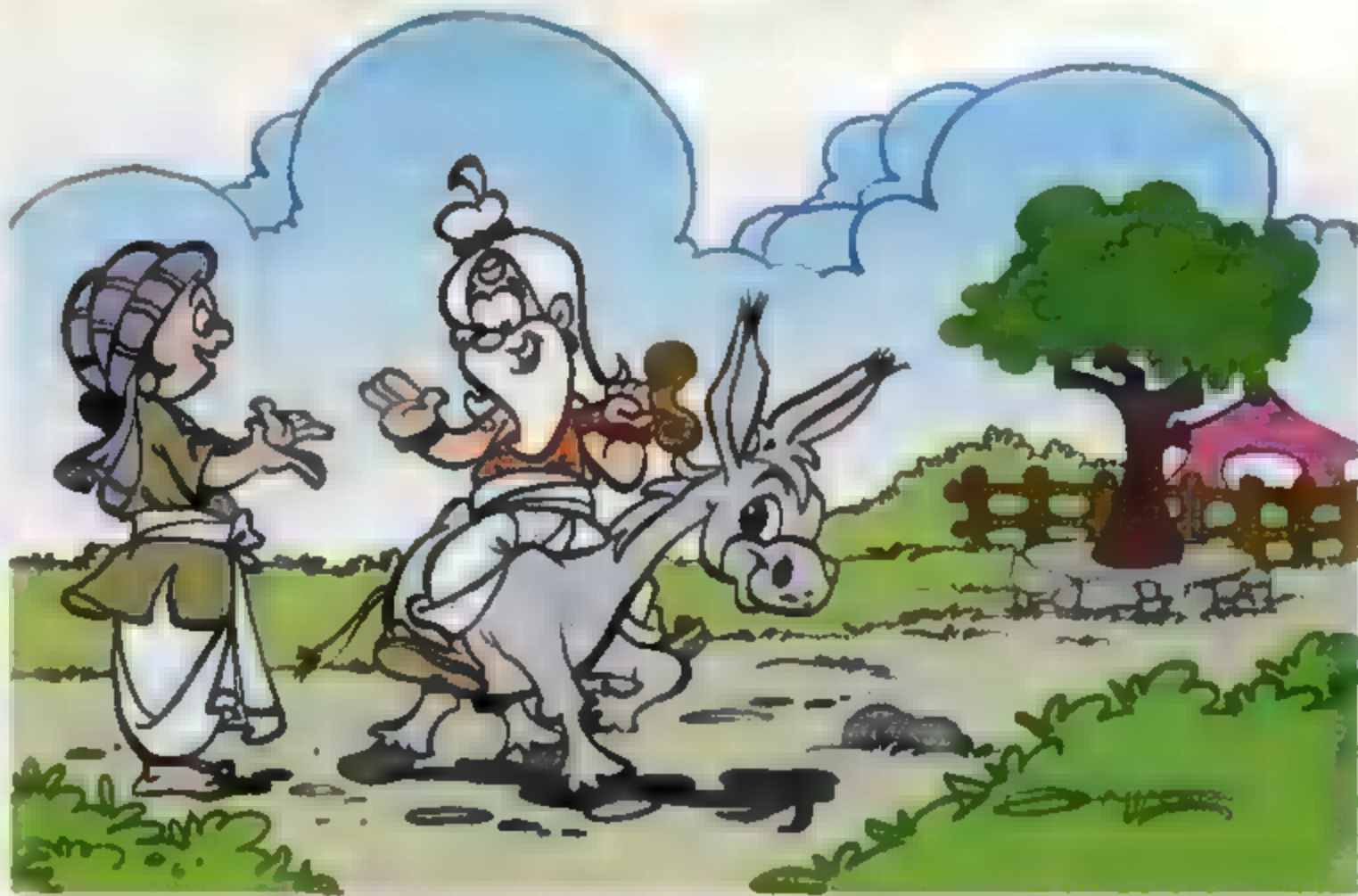
"But that is incredible!" exclaimed the landlord.

"Thank you, sir. I've won my reward," said the farmer, happily grabbing the pouch.

The landlord could not contradict him, for, some of those present were so amused that they even clapped their hands.

The farmer bowed to all and went away with the windfall that came his way.





THE SPECIAL DONKEY

The guru was in the habit of visiting his householder disciples. He would go on foot. He was growing old and often he looked tired. But he never complained.

One of his disciples one day brought him a handsome donkey. "Sir, be pleased to use this creature for your journeys. It pains us to see you walking from village to village through sand and mud. This is a sturdy animal and will serve you well," he told his guru.

Even though the guru did not mind walking, he was not inclined to refuse a gift made with sincere love. He accepted the donkey.

Next day the guru was scheduled to pay a visit to his landlord's house. He rode the donkey and the donkey

was led by his disciples who walked on either side. A number of men and women had gathered in front of the landlord's mansion to receive the guru. They prostrated before the donkey. The guru was garlanded before he alighted and some of the flowers fell on the donkey. The animal must have felt flattered.

While the guru was escorted into the mansion, the donkey was led into a shed where the landlord's donkeys were kept.

"You're great!" said the landlord's donkeys. "We're proud that one of us commands such great awe and respect!"

The guru's donkey laughed. He, too, had begun to realise his greatness.

An hour or so later the guru came out of the mansion. Meanwhile the landlord's servants had fed the donkey well. The guru rode back to his Ashram.

Day after day, wherever the guru went riding the donkey, devotees prostrated before it without waiting for the guru to alight. The donkey invariably took the gesture as obeisance due to him.

Because of some holy ceremony in the landlord's household, once the guru had to visit his house consecutively for three days. That, of all the places, was found by the donkey to be most congenial. He was always eager to go there. He was annoyed that he did not receive the same kind of reverence elsewhere.

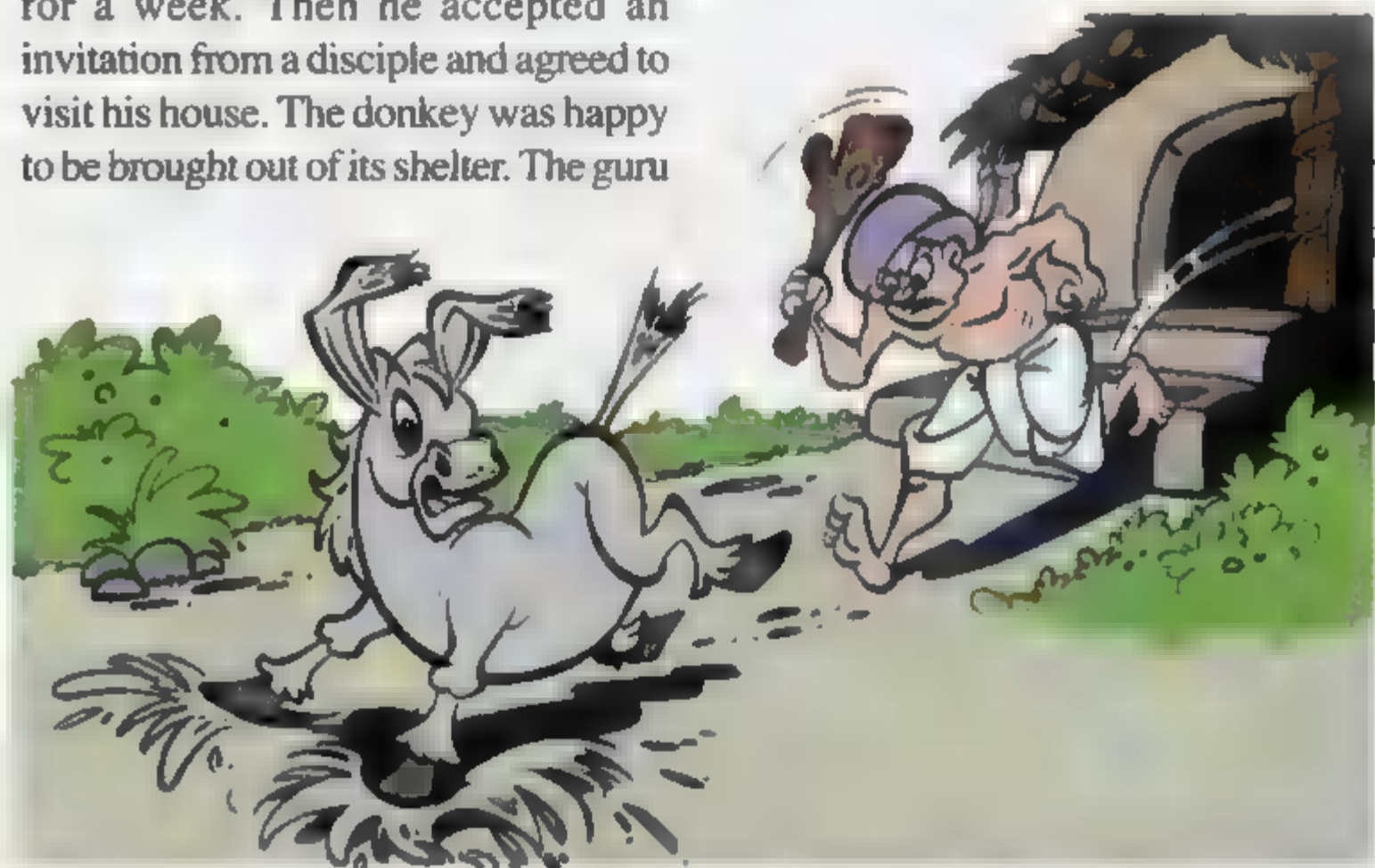
After the ceremony was over, the guru did not move out of his Ashram for a week. Then he accepted an invitation from a disciple and agreed to visit his house. The donkey was happy to be brought out of its shelter. The guru

rode it and the disciples led it towards its destination. But as soon as they reached the crossroads from which they were to take a road opposite to the one leading towards the landlord's house, the donkey refused to budge. It then turned towards his favourite road.

The disciples, naturally, forced it to divert its course. The angry donkey threw the guru off its back and ran towards the landlord's house.

That was not far and with great expectations it pushed its way right onto the verandah of the mansion and was about to enter the inner courtyard when the landlord's servants began thrashing it and driving it out.

The donkey limped back to the street, muttering, 'Only if they had recognised me!'



*Glimpses of a great civilisation –
its glorious quest for Truth through the ages.*

4. GENESIS OF THE SACRED RIVER

Since it was a Sunday, Sandip and Chameli had no school. Their grandfather, Prof. Devnath, had just finished reading the morning newspaper when Chameli made a dive into his lap. Sandip was more restrained in his conduct.

Devnath's son, Srikumar, who was a business executive and was free to be with his children only on Sundays, also entered the room. "You seem to be waging a war on your grandfather!" he commented, trying to sound a bit stern.

"Yes, dad, a war to plunder his knowledge," said Chameli.

"Chameli, no doubt, is a bandit. I would be the last person to join her had I not known that in this particular case, plundering of Grandpa would not leave him impoverished!" added Sandip. "He will still continue to be as rich as ever."

Srikumar admired his children's wit.

He smiled and, as his father handed him the newspaper, he moved away.

"Now we must take a plunge into the holy Ganga!" chirped Chameli. "You promised to tell us why at all the river is sacred."

The professor straightened up. The two children sat on a divan facing him, and the veteran went on:

"You know, the Himalayas have been the greatest pride of India through the ages. That is a unique region indeed! Mystics believed that there is much more there than the eye can see. It is a world by itself. Probably it will be more appropriate to say that there are many worlds hidden in the Himalayas."

"What do you mean by many worlds, Grandpa?" asked Sandip.

"The physical world is not the only world to exist. There are worlds we



f India

cannot see."

"How can one know about them if one cannot see them?" asked Chameli.

"You do not see my mind or even your own mind. But you know very well from your experience and feeling that the minds are there. There are sages and seers who know through their experience about the invisible worlds," answered Grandpa and he then narrated a story:

Long, long ago, Sage Narada was returning to Goloka, the abode of his Master, Lord Vishnu, after one of his trips to the earth. The passage to his destination lay through the Himalayas.

Narada, as is well known, was a gifted musician. He was a singer who sang about the Lord. While absorbed in his music, he slowly began his ascent, enjoying both the physical as well as the hidden sights of the grand and the glorious Himalaya.

It was a moonlit night. Narada was passing by a golden valley on the high altitudes when his eyes fell on a host of beautiful figures, some seated, some

strolling, and some lying on the moon-bathed, snowy rocks.

Narada stopped singing and stood gazing at those figures. Their beautiful contours and charming smiles amazed him. Narada, of course, knew that they were supernatural beings, but there were so many varieties of supernatural beings. He did not know to which category they belonged.

He went closer, when they all stood up and greeted him, hands folded.

"Who are you?" asked Narada.

"We're the gundharvas who are the spirits of the Ragas and Raginis," one of them replied.

Now it was Narada's turn to greet them. These spirits were the inspirations

behind the various modes of music. If not for them, there would have been no music.

Soon Narada observed that each of those beings was more or less disfigured. If some bore scratches on their cheeks, some others appeared to have received whip lashes. There were markings of



blows on the bodies of some others.

"What's this? Who has inflicted such injuries on you?" asked Narada, quite surprised.

"O great sage, don't you bother about that!" they said. But Narada's curiosity was deep. He would not go away until his question had been answered.



The gundharvas were obliged to tell him the truth. Every time a singer sang with a sense of pride, and without any love for the Raga, or made careless errors or wrong and unnecessary moves while singing, every time a musician did the same while playing his instrument, the gundharva – the spirit of the concerned Raga – received a blow or a scratch on his or her person. Thus, over the years, they had been disfigured!

Narada hung his head in shame, for wasn't he, too, a musician?

He was silent for a while. Narada

then asked: "Please tell me, O noble gundharvas, what can be done to undo the harm done to you?"

"Only if we get an opportunity to listen to the most perfect singer can our maimed limbs become normal again."

"But where do we find the most perfect singer? Can you give me some clue?" asked Narada.

"Well, Lord Shiva is the most perfect singer! But why should he care to sing for our sake?" observed the gundharvas.

"Lord Shiva's compassion is infinite. Let go to him," said Narada as he took leave of the gundharvas.

There was no need to plead with Lord Shiva, for the great God immediately agreed to sing; but he said: "I cannot sing unless there is at least one perfect listener in the audience."

"Who can be the perfect listeners?" asked Narada.

"There are only two of them, Brahma and Vishnu," revealed Lord Shiva.

Narada at once proceeded to meet the two Gods. Both of them said they would consider it a rare opportunity to enjoy the singing of Shiva.

A time was fixed for the event. Brahma and Vishnu arrived at Kailash, Shiva's abode. So did the gundharvas. Shiva began to sing. The whole atmosphere became vibrant. There was bliss all around. All the gods and goddesses came silently rushing to the spot. Shiva went on singing, entranced. The marks of injuries from the bodies of the gundharvas now vanished.

Something unexpected happened.

Lord Vishnu became so deeply absorbed in the flow of the music that a layer of the luminous aura around his body melted. It began to flow away.

That was seen by Brahma. He captured the liquefied aura of Vishnu in his Kamandalu – a small vessel held by hand.

There the rare stuff remained – nobody knows for how long. Then it must have been released so that it flowed down as a river in the heavens. Then Prince Bhagiratha brought it down to the earth.

“Wonderful!” The exclamation came from Srikumar who stood near the door, newspaper in hand. “As you began narrating the story, Father, I stood here forgetting my newspaper and forgetting even to sit down. I never knew that there was such an absorbing story behind the origin of the Ganga.”

“My son,” said Devnath, “I was too preoccupied with my career and my research when you were young. I had no time to tell you stories. That was a

great lapse, I now regret. I’m doing some penance by telling stories to *your* children!”

“No, Grandpa, telling stories cannot be a penance!” protested Chameli.

“Father, the story of the origin of Ganga is symbolic. Am I right?” asked Srikumar.

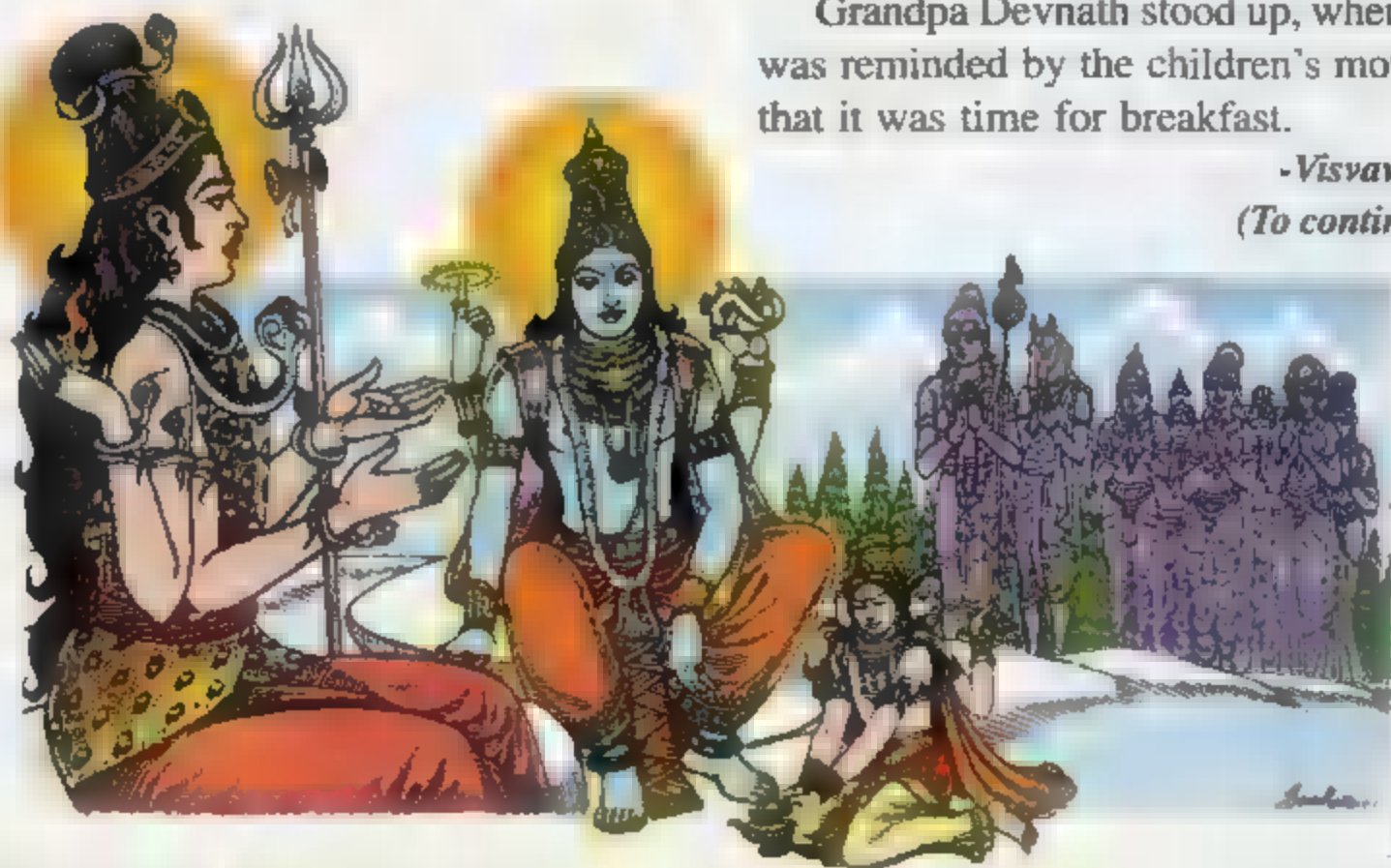
“You’re right. There are elements of symbolism in it at many levels. Lord Shiva is believed to be the source of all arts – music and dance, for instance. In him, music remains in its purest form. Music is an expression of the inner harmony pervading the world. Harmony removes all disharmony. That is how the Gundharvas were restored to their normal forms.

“And what a lofty picture the story draws of the power of music!”

“The perfect listener can become one with the music - and flow away as the music flows! Again, Lord Vishnu is immortal consciousness. No wonder that his aura, melted as the Ganga, could revive the dead!”

Grandpa Devnath stood up, when he was reminded by the children’s mother that it was time for breakfast.

-Visvvasu
(To continue)





WHOSE SON?

"Why do you look so gloomy and pensive, my boy?" Shyamdas asked Ram, who sat under a tree while tending cattle.

Shyamdas was a physician as well as an exorcist. When some people flocked to him for getting treated for their oilments, others went to him whenever anybody was possessed by some spirit. He loved Ram, because the sweet-natured boy was helpful to everybody.

Tears came to Ram's eyes. Nobody had bothered about his problem; nobody had spoken to him with so much affection.

"Sir, you know my parents well, don't you?" asked Ram.

"Of course, I know them well and I also know that they love you, their only child, very much!" said Shyamdas.

"Sir, they love me all right, but they don't love each other. Whenever they are together, they quarrel. If one of them is alone with me, he or she goes on criticising the other. They have no time to shower their love on me, no time to think how I feel about their quarrels. If my mother says I should be given milk, my father says I should be given curd. If my mother says ■ blue shirt would look good on me, my father says it should be green. Home is really a hell for me," explained Ram.

Shyamdas nodded with a smile. "I thought as much, my boy," he said and



Do not be curious about the caste in which a sage was born. Know him by his knowledge. The sword is what matters, not the sheath.

- Kabir

then, lowering his voice, he gave him some advice what he should do to change the situation. They both talked for a long time.

Back home as twilight fell, Ram suddenly shouted at his mother: "Where's my tiffin?"

"You're asking for tiffin, my boy? What would you like to have?" asked Vimla, quite surprised for, Ram had never spoken to her so roughly.

"What do you mean asking me what I would like to have? Haven't I told you that I must have fried groundnuts, hot, and some luddos, as soon as I returned from the fields? Where are they? Why are you gazing at me as if I were a ghost?"

"Don't say so, my son! How can a mother see a ghost in her child who is dearer to her than anything else in the world?" said Vimla.

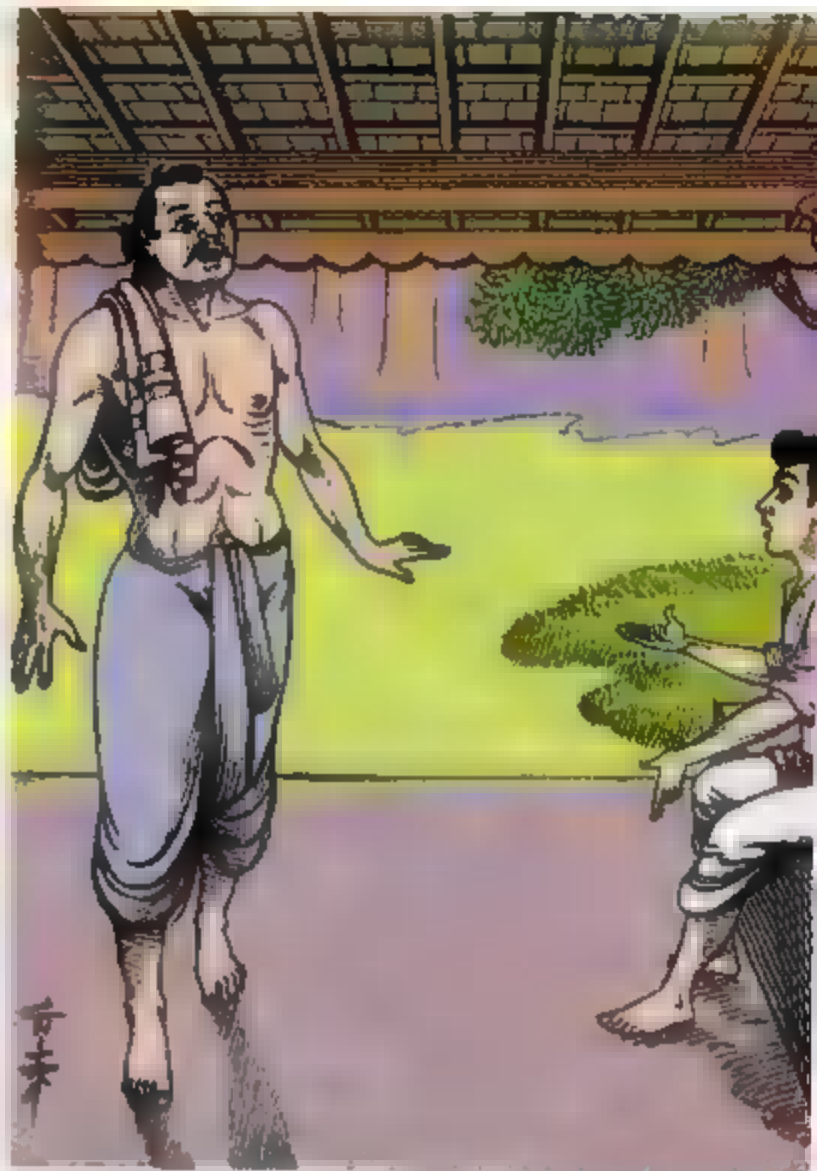
"Enough! Bring my tiffin at once or I leave home for good!" shouted Ram again.

"You never told me what you would want for tiffin, my child, but I shall fry some groundnuts at once. We don't have any at home, but I'll go and borrow some from our neighbour."

Vimla went out.

"When did you come back, my son?" asked Shridhar, Ram's father, who had just returned from his work.

"Don't ask me when I returned! Thank God I returned at all!" Ram



snubbed him.

Shridhar was taken aback. What had come upon his son? He had never talked to him in that manner!

"Didn't you promise to buy me a pair of sandals? Am I to let my feet wear away walking on thorns and pebbles and poisonous insects?" demanded Ram.

"Well, my son, that had never occurred to me! We all walk bare-foot!" said Shridhar apologetically.

At night Ram could overhear his parents discussing between themselves, in a subdued voice, the sudden change that had come upon their son. For the first time, he heard them discuss a problem, instead of opposing each

other. They surmised that some evil spirit must have possessed Ram and he should be taken to Shyamdas.

Next day, both Shridhar and Vimla went to Shyamdas and explained their problem.

"We'll see about it; you may go now," said Shyamdas.

As the couple went out, Shyamdas called Shridhar alone and asked him, "Whose son is Ram?"

Shridhar was taken aback. "He's my son!" he replied.

"You may go and wait outside."

Shyamdas then called Vimla and put the same question to her.

"You know it very well, sir, Ram is my son!" said Vimla.

Shyamdas went out and asked Shridhar to come in. He told the couple: "Your answers to my question were wrong. Find the right answer and come to me. I shall begin my treatment only then."

Two days passed. Ram's behaviour remained unchanged. The couple forgot their quarrels. Both were upset about

their son.

On the third day the couple returned to Shyamdas. "We believe, we have found the right answer, sir. Ram is neither my son nor her son, but our son!"

Shyamdas smiled. "You're right. Since Ram is the son of both of you, both of you must conduct yourselves before him in such a way that he remains happy. Instead of teaching him how to quarrel, you must teach him how to appreciate one another's point of view and to adjust. Ram was possessed not by any spirit from outside, but by the spirit of your mutual hatred which pervades your household," explained Shyamdas.

He also sent for Ram and tied a talisman round his arm. "It contains petals of flowers offered to the Divine Mother. This will always remind you of the Divine presence within you," he said.

Their household, before long, became a heaven of peace. Shyamdas also taught Ram to read and write and then trained him to become a physician.



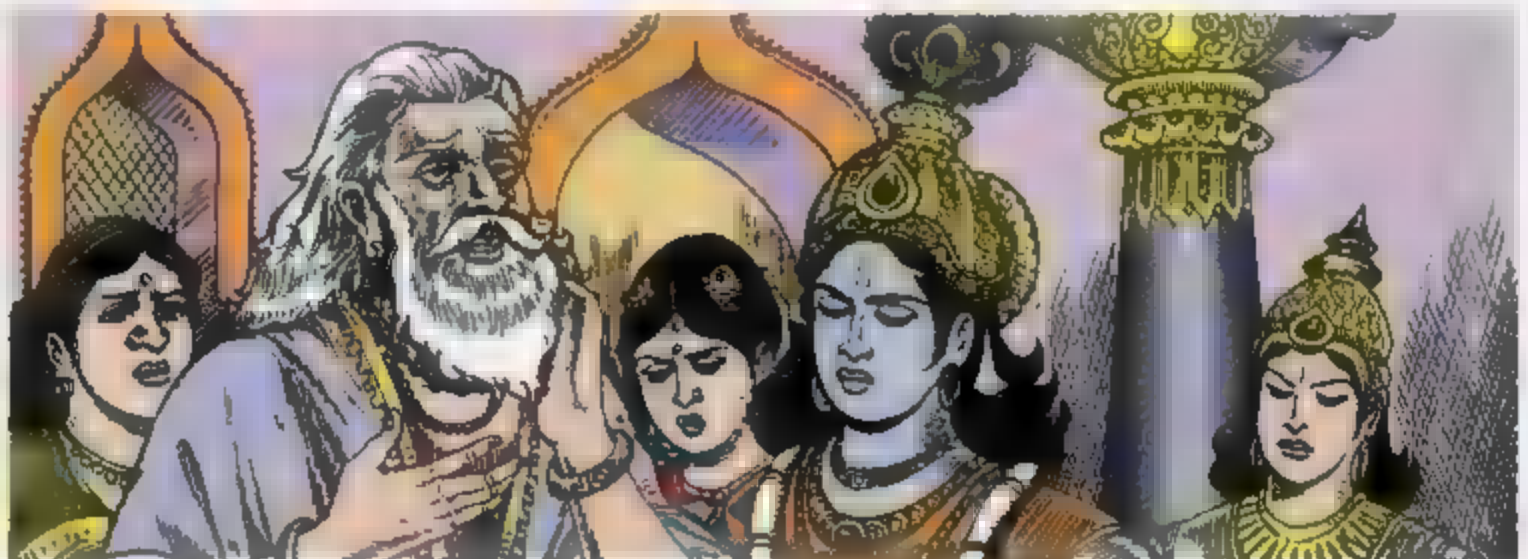
STORY OF THE MAHABHARATA

(The story so far: After Bhishma fell down in the battle at Kurukshetra, the command of the Kaurava forces was handed to Karna. He himself was struck by an arrow from Arjuna. The war came to an end on the eighteenth day. The Kauravas were routed. Krishna persuaded Dhritarashtra to accept the Pandavas as his sons. Yudhishtira was reluctant to rule over Hastinapur after all the tragedy he suffered during the war. The sages in one voice told him not to nurse any remorse. He was led in a procession to the capital. He asked everybody to consider Dhritarashtra as the real ruler. The Pandavas then went to meet Bhishma now awaiting death. He had a lot of advice to give to the Pandavas. The Patriarch passed away and the Pandavas conducted his obsequies. Yudhishtira was advised to perform the Aswamedha yagna.)

After the coronation of Yudhishtira, Sri Krishna stayed on at Hastinapur for some time, and then returned to Dwaraka. Yudhishtira decided to visit the Himalayas and search for Marutta's wealth lying buried there. The Pandavas were accompanied by their army. After reaching the Himalaya region and locating the wealth, they fasted and meditated for a whole night and worshipped Lord Shiva, Kubera, and Manibhadra the next day. They

propitiated the spirits by offering sacrifices. Later, they found several kinds of gold plates, urns, bowls, and cups. They were collected and carried on a large number of camels, horses, and vehicles as well as men. The Pandavas then began their return journey.

It was announced that the Aswamedha Yagna would soon be performed. Sri Krishna left for Hastinapur along with Pradyumna, Satyaki, Balarama and Subhadra.





They were affectionately received by Dhritarastra and Vidura. This time Krishna enjoyed the hospitality of Yuyutsu.

Soon Uttara gave birth to a son. But the baby did not cry and lay lifeless. Kunti rushed to Krishna. In a moving voice, she implored him: "O Krishna! You alone can save the child. He seems to have been hit by Aswathama's arrow. Please bestow your Grace on him and revive him!"

Subhadra, Draupadi and Uttara, too, pleaded with Krishna. Krishna touched the child with his foot. Instantly, the baby showed signs of life. Everybody was delighted. The child was considered the symbol of the ordeals

and trials the Pandavas had successfully surmounted. Hence Krishna named him Parikshit – the Tried One.

Meanwhile, Yudhishtira prepared for the Aswamedha, with the approval of Vyasa and Krishna. He took the vow for the Yagna on a holy day. The horse for the yagna was to be chosen by Brahmins and charioteers together. The horse was expected to wander across all countries before returning to its owner. That was the custom.

Now that Yudhishtira was dedicated to this sacred rite, the burden of ruling the kingdom was vested in Bhima, assisted by Nakula. Arjuna was to follow the horse, taking care of it and protecting it. Sahadeva was to look after the Pandava family.

Yudhishtira advised Arjuna: "Remember, if you are challenged by any Kshatriya, then don't rush to fight with him; better invite him to participate in the Yagna."

At the end of rituals, Yudhishtira himself released the horse. Arjuna followed it with his bow – the Gandiva. The citizens cheered them. Along with Arjuna went a disciple of Yagnavalkya as the caretaker of the horse, a few Brahmin scholars, and a number of Kshatriyas.

Although Yudhishtira had advised Arjuna to avoid fighting, he had to fight with several people. Whoever challenged him – the Kirathas, Yavanas,

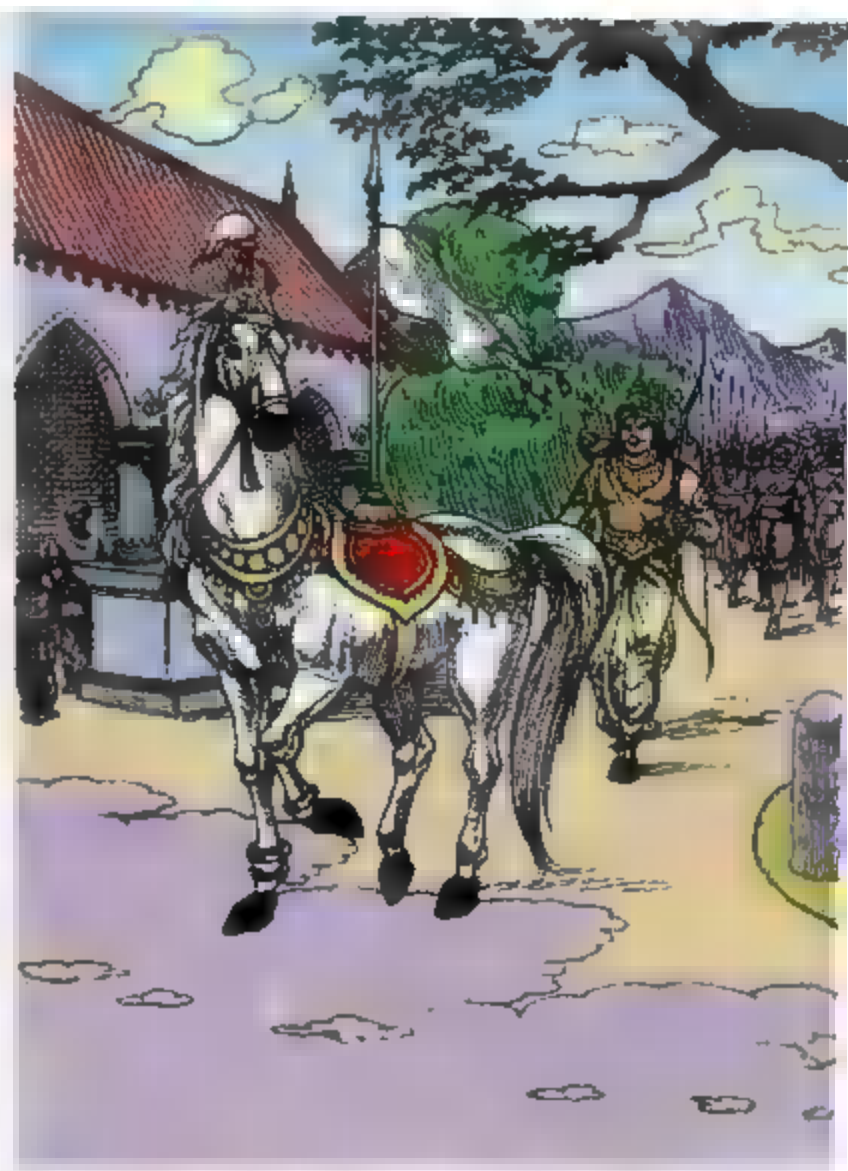
or Kshatriyas – were defeated by him. Trigartaka had been killed by Arjuna during the Mahabharata war. His son and grandson made an attempt to capture the horse. Arjuna tried to be good towards them, but they shot arrows at him. Arjuna was, therefore, obliged to fight with them and soon he succeeded in killing their leaders, Surya Varma, Ketudharma, Ghritavarma, and fifteen others. Their army then surrendered to him.

At Pragytishpur, Vajradatta, son of Bhagadatta, offered a fight. Arjuna defeated him, but instead of killing him, he invited him to attend the Yagna.

Arjuna had also to fight with the army of Saindhava. They were routed. Saindhava had died in the Mahabharata war. His wife, Dussala, was the daughter of Dhritarashtra. Their son, Suratha, died on hearing the news that Arjuna was advancing with the horse.

Dussala placed her grandson on ■ chariot and brought him to Arjuna's presence and said: "Like Parikshit, treat this child, too, as your grandson. Look at his face and pardon all the Saindhavas. I regret that his grandfather was your enemy. But please forget all that."

Arjuna embraced his cousin Dussala, before proceeding further along with the horse. When it entered Manipur, the ruler, Babruvahan, who was the son of Arjuna and Chitrangada,



went to see him. Arjuna was not pleased with his son's conduct. "Aren't you ■ Kshatriya? Why don't you challenge me to a fight? Remember, I haven't come here to enjoy your hospitality or sweet words."

Uloopi appeared on the scene and told Babruvahan: "My child, I'm a daughter of the Nagas and, therefore, I am also a mother to you. I advise you to fight with your father, for that is what would please him."

Babruvahan now felt inspired to fight. Soon there ensued ■ grave fight between the two and both fell down unconscious. Chitrangada, who was shocked to find her husband and son in such a condition, began to weep. When



Babruvahan regained consciousness, he repented having been the cause of his father's fall and mother's sorrow. He took to penance.

But Uloopi told him: "Do you think your father had died at your hands? Don't you know that nobody can ever defeat Arjuna? With my occult powers, I had just created some illusions. Come, take this jewel and touch him with this."

Babruvahan did accordingly and Arjuna got up, as if from sleep! He embraced Babruvahan and was happy to see both Chitrangada and Uloopi. "Why did you two come to the battlefield?" he asked them.

Uloopi said: "You had killed Bhishma in an improper way, and had

committed a sin. I had you temporarily killed by your own son in order to rid you of that sin."

Arjuna was happy to learn this. He asked Babruvahan to participate in the yagna. He requested Arjuna to spend one night as his guest. But he declined, saying it was imperative for him to follow the horse.

The horse went up to the sea coast. It then began its return journey towards Hastinapur. On the way, it reached Rajgriha, the capital of Magadh. King Meghasandhi challenged Arjuna to a battle, but was defeated. He, too, was invited to attend the Aswamedha yagna.

Thereafter Arjuna had to give battle to Mlechha, Nishadha, Sakuni's son, as well as the kings of Gandhara, Dravida, Andhra, and Odra. He defeated them all and returned to Hastinapur.

The Aswamedha was performed with great pomp and due ceremonies. All those who attended the function were given gifts by Yudhishtira. Everybody praised Yudhishtira.

Yudhishtira ruled the kingdom with the help of his brothers. Vidura, Sanjaya and Yuyutsu were always at Yudhishtira's service. Kunti gave company to Gandhari. They were well looked after by Draupadi, Subhadra, and the other wives of the Pandavas. Vyasa often visited Hastinapur and the

Pandavas listened to his discourses. All of Dhritarashtra's wishes were attended to promptly. The Pandavas were eager to see that Dhritarashtra and Gandhari did not miss their sons.

Fifteen years went by. One day, Dhritarashtra told Yudhishtira: "My son, you've always been most considerate to us. We both are extremely pleased with you. I've done a lot of charity. I have also duly performed the funeral rites of my sons. There's nothing more for me to do in this world. Now I must prepare for my journey into the world beyond. Please allow Gandhari and me to depart for the forest, where I will constantly pray for your welfare."

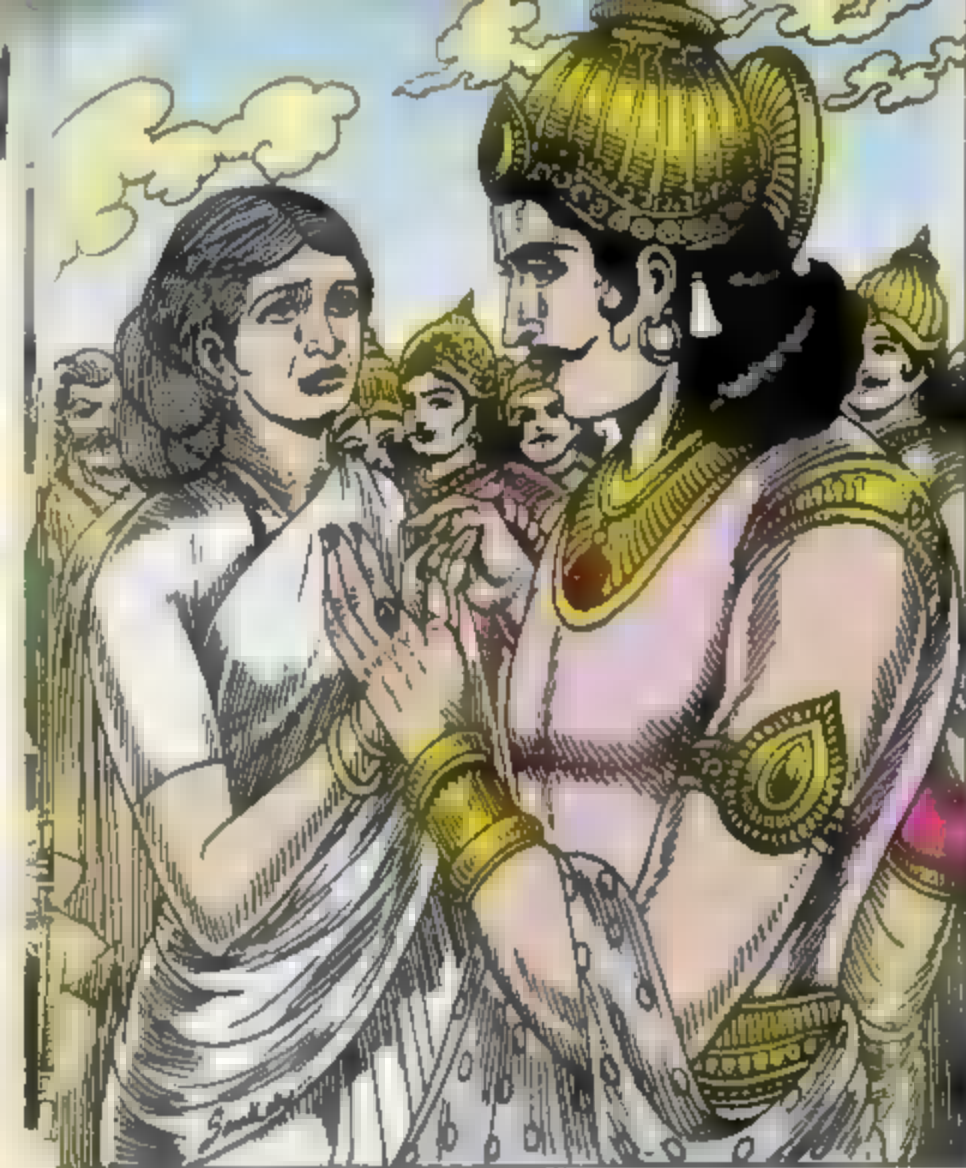
But Yudhishtira did not immediately give his consent. He said: "How can I be at peace while you suffer in a forest? The world will only blame me and my brothers. I care neither for the throne nor for comforts. I will rather hand over the kingdom to someone and go with you to the forest.

Just then Vyasa happened to come there. He advised Yudhishtira to agree to Dhritarashtra's wish. The people of Hastinapur came to meet Dhritarashtra when they heard of his decision. He told them: "Gandhari and I are departing for the forest. All of you have to accept our decision. I'm sure Yudhishtira has proved himself a better ruler than Duryodhana. This land had once been



ruled by Shantanu, and then by Bhishma, and then by Vichitravirya. I, too, had an occasion to serve you. If I had done any wrong to anyone, I seek your pardon. Numerous Kshatriyas had suffered because of Duryodhana's blunder. I have to share the blame. I pray to you with folded hands, forget all that had happened. From now on, Yudhishtira will be your sole ruler."

The next morning, Vidura met Yudhishtira. "My son, Dhritarashtra proposes to go to the forest in the holy month of Kartik. Before leaving, he desires to perform some rites in homage to the souls of Bhishma, Somadatta, Bahlika, Drona, Saindhava, besides his



sons and friends. For this purpose he is in need of money."

Yudhishtira told Vidura: "Dhritarashtra will be given whatever he needs."

He performed the rites on a grand scale. Alms were distributed liberally. Along with Gandhari, he then worshipped Kartikeya and wearing a dress made of bark, he set out for the forest. Brahmins chanted *mantras* all the way. They were followed by the Kaurava women. The Pandavas wept. Kuntidevi held Gandhari's hand. Draupadi, Subhadra, Uttara, and the other women of the city walked behind them. Vidura and Sanjaya accompanied Yudhishtira.

After they left behind the city, Dhritarashtra asked Yuyutsu and Kripacharya to return. Gradually most of the people stayed back. But Yudhishtira continued to go forward. He told Kuntidevi: "Mother, you should now return."

But she had decided to go with Dhritarashtra and Gandhari. She told Yudhishtira: "My son, Gandhari and Dhritarashtra are like my parents-in-law. I must remain with them to serve them." The Pandava brothers tried to dissuade her, but in vain. They and Draupadi then returned to Hastinapur.

Dhritarashtra walked till evening and stopped at a place on the banks of the Ganges. Vidura and Sanjaya prepared grass-beds for him and Gandhari. At Vidura's suggestion, a cottage was erected. After staying there for some days, they all went to Kurukshetra and stayed in an ashram. A king named Satayupa, who had passed on his throne to his son, was there doing penance.

Dhritarashtra now began his penance. Kunti received the people who came to meet them. Meanwhile, after the departure of Kuntidevi, the Pandavas were always gloomy. Young Sahadeva was constantly pining for Kunti. He was anxious to see her. Draupadi: one day, told Yudhishtira: "The women here wish to see Gandhari, Dhritarashtra, and Kuntidevi."

Yudhishtira at once prepared to start for Dhritarashtra's ashram. He announced that if the citizens so wished, they could accompany them.

They set out the next day on a number of chariots, horses, and camels, and a large crowd following them. The women were taken in palanquins. Yuyutsu and Dhaumya stayed back in the palace.

The ashramites came forward to receive the Pandavas. They were told that Dhritarashtra had gone to the Yamuna to fetch water and flowers. The Pandavas advanced towards the river and could see Dhritarashtra, Gandhari and Kuntidevi from a distance. Sahadeva rushed forward and, falling at Kuntidevi's feet, wept like a child. She, too, could not control her tears and hugged him.

Dhritarashtra, now surrounded by the Pandavas and their wives, felt as though he was back in Hastinapur! The sages of the ashram came to see the

Pandavas. Sanjaya introduced them to the sages. Yudhishtira enquired about Dhritarashtra's health, and asked: "Where is Vidura? I don't see him here!"

"Vidura has given up food and is undergoing deep penance. He has grown extremely weak," said Dhritarashtra.

Vidura could now be seen at a distance. Yudhishtira proceeded towards him. "Please wait, I'm eager to meet you!"

Vidura stood at an open place. "Don't you recognise me?" he asked Yudhishtira. Vidura looked lean and emaciated. Soon thereafter, Yudhishtira could see Vidura lying dead. He wanted to cremate the body; but as it was forbidden to burn a mendicant's body, he refrained from the rite. He returned to the ashram and reported the incident to all. Everybody was sad.

(To conclude)



THE LOYAL SUBJECT

The king's sepoy went to Shankarshan and told him that he was being summoned by the king.

"Good. Let's go. I'm a loyal subject of the king," said Shankarshan and he set out for the palace along with the sepoy.

As they walked, the sepoy told him: "How could you betray a poor, old woman? You were about to be beaten up by a moneylender in the bazaar. The woman took pity on you and paid the moneylender on your behalf. You promised to pay back the amount to the woman the very next day. A year has passed and still you haven't paid her. As everybody knows, our king hardly punishes anybody. He finds some good quality in every criminal to pardon him. But I think he's going to punish you."

"I'll accept the punishment as I'm a loyal subject," said Shankarshan.

The two were nearing the bazaar, but Shankarshan requested the sepoy to lead him to the palace through a lonely road. The sepoy obliged him, but asked him on the way: "Why did you avoid the bazaar?"

"My friend, I've borrowed practically from everybody in the bazaar and have not paid neither the capital nor its interest to anybody. They will skin me alive the moment they see me. But as I'm a loyal subject, I must retain my skin and life for the king to punish me. Well, don't you think that this quality of mine, my loyalty to the king, should be enough for the king to pardon me?" replied Shankarshan.





St. John's Church

ON THE BANKS OF THE KAVERI - VIII An Ancient Dam

Story : Jayanthi Mahalingam

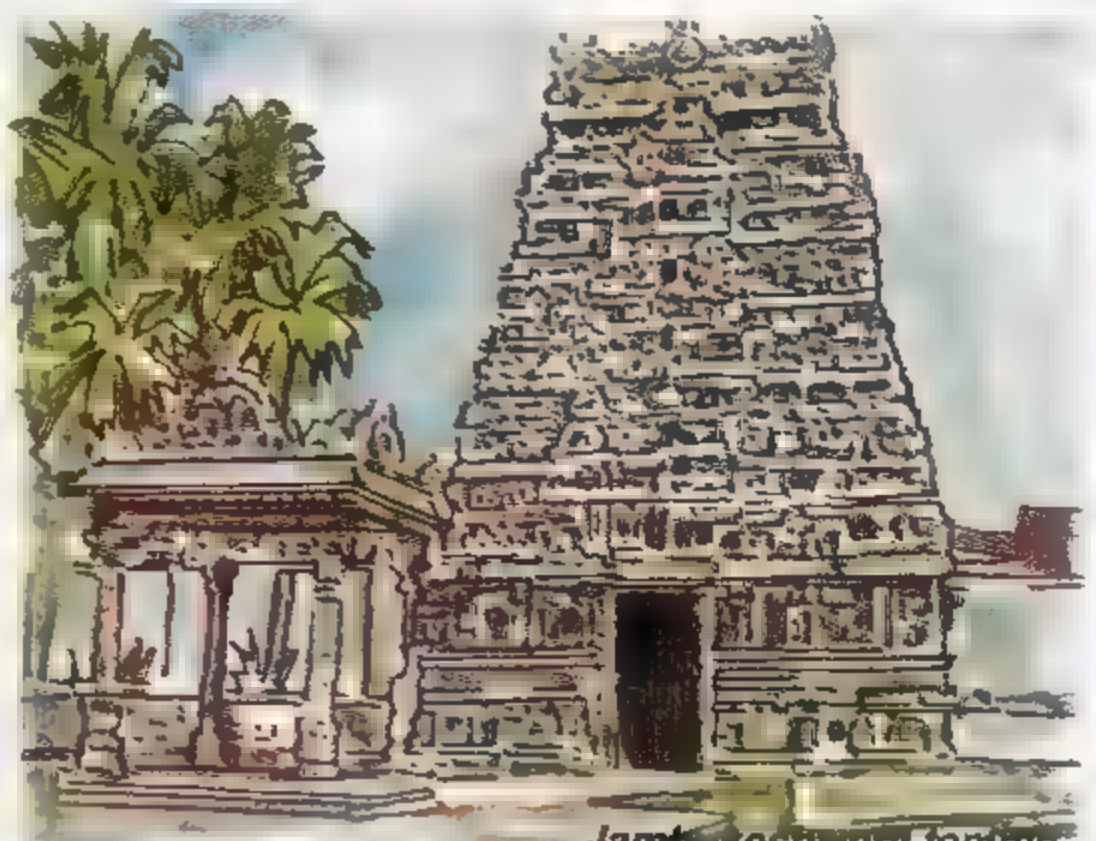
Illustrations : Goutam Sen

Tirichirapalli city is well-known, not only for its temples, but also for the beautiful churches and civic buildings established by the British in the 18th and 19th centuries. Christ Church was built in 1766 north of the Teppekulam or tank. St. John's Church followed in 1816, located south of the fort in the cantonment area. The Catholic cathedral of Our Lady of Lourdes was built in 1840 alongside the tank. The house where Robert Clive lived is now part of the famous St. Joseph's College, the best-known in the district.

On the island of Srirangam itself, is the Shiva temple of Jambukeshwara

at Tiruvanaikka. It rises aristocratic and aloof, its soaring towers and many-pillared halls adorned with enchanting sculptures. The temple traces its origins to the Sangam age, sometime around the 1st century B.C. A Chola ruler called Kochengannan is believed to have constructed the temple.

The *apulingam* (*apu* means *water*) enshrined in the temple is at a low level and is always surrounded by water. Once upon a time, there was a grove of *jambu* trees at the site of the temple. Under one tree was the *shivalingam*. An



Jambukeshwara temple

The elephant bathed
the *lingam* daily



elephant and a spider were both ardent devotees of Shiva. The spider's mode of worship was to spin a web over the *lingam* to protect it from dust and falling leaves. The elephant fetched water from the Kaveri and proceeded to bathe the *lingam* daily, destroying the web in the process. This happened time and again, till the enraged spider crept into the elephant's trunk one day and stung so hard that the mighty beast fell dead. The story goes that the spider was reborn as Kochengannan in the ruling Chola dynasty at Uraiyur.

This vast temple has five enclosures or *prakarams* with massive walls and lofty towers. The second and the third *prakarams* date back to the 13th century. The Akhilandeswari shrine is located in the fourth *prakaram* and has an exquisite idol of the goddess. The eyes have a sparkling, almost lifelike quality. But the *devi* once had such a fearsome aspect and generated such heat, that no one could remain in the sanctum for too long. It is said that she became more benevolent only when Adi Sankara visited the shrine and adorned her with earrings (*thatanka*) bearing the symbol of the *chakra*! The great Muthuswami Dikshitar, one of the Trinity of Carnatic music, was so moved by the sight of the goddess, that he composed a melodious *krithi* in her praise.

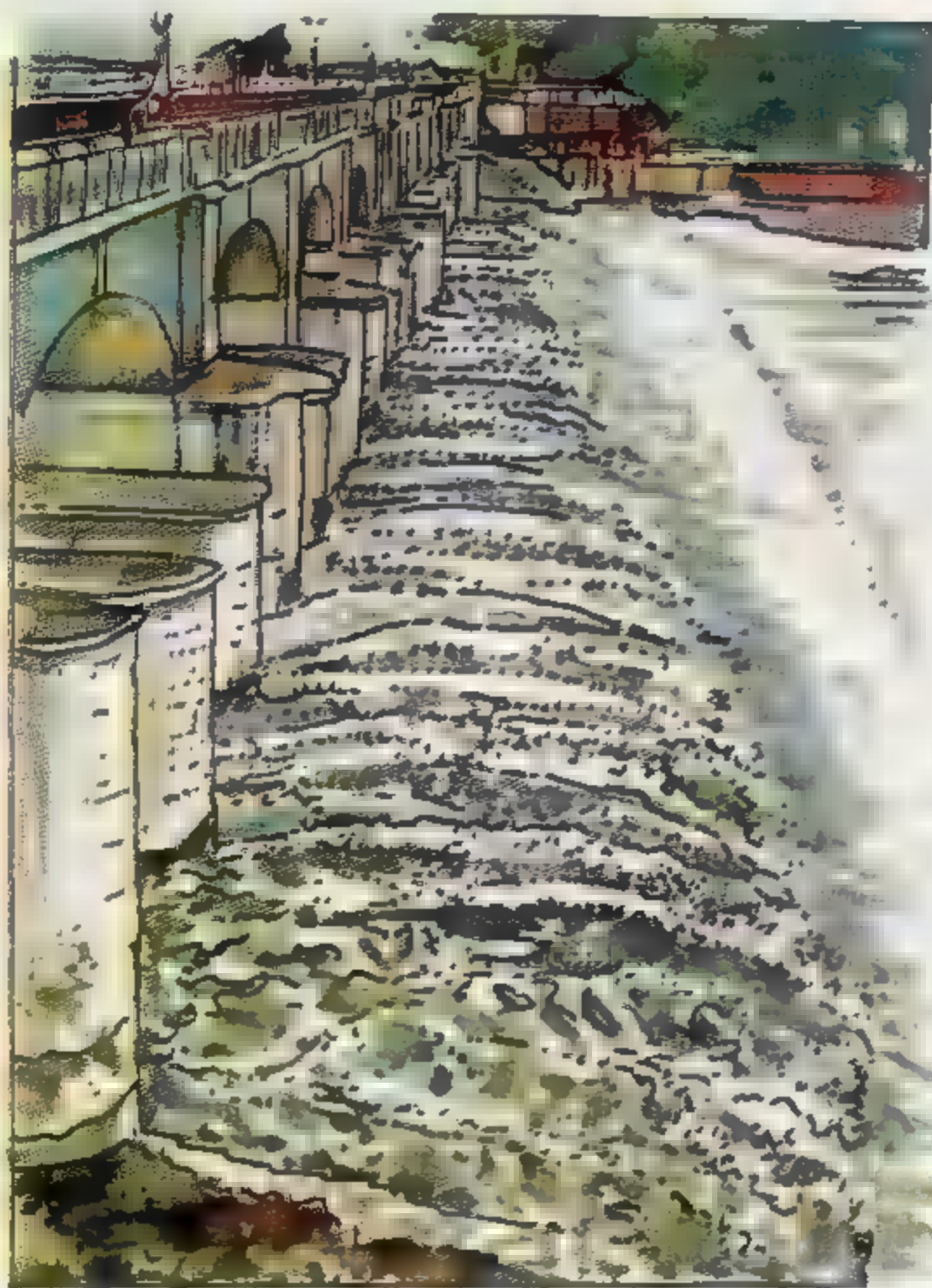
Tiruvanaikka ranks high among the Shaivite shrines in Tamil Nadu. The ancient temple was patronised and endowed lavishly not only by the Chola monarchs, but also by the Hoysala, Pandya and the Nayak dynasties. The original temple has been added to and modified many times over the centuries. It was in the Jambukeshwara temple that the French army took refuge from the British during the Carnatic war and it was also the scene of their surrender.

About 2 km from Srirangam island, the Kaveri puts out a branch called the Coleroon or Kollidam. At this spot stands the Grand Anicut or *Kalanai* (Tamil for *stone dam*). The word 'anicut' is derived from the Tamil 'anaikattu' which means 'dam-building'. Believed to have been built by Karikalan, a Chola

king who lived in the 2nd century A.D., the Anicut was the first major attempt to harness the Kaveri for irrigation as well ■ to prevent floods. The Anicut was 329 m long, 12-18 m wide and 4-5 m deep. The original dam no longer exists, as British engineers led by Sir Arthur Cotton reconstructed it completely in the 1800's ■ part of the Cauvery Delta Scheme. They raised its height in 1806 and provided sluices in 1830. During the construction, they were astonished to find that the immense surge of water was controlled by a solid mass of rough stone cemented together only by clay!

The Upper Anicut or Upper Coleroon dam was built between 1836-38 by Cotton, about 32 km upstream of the Grand Anicut. It was 780 m long and 2 m high with 22 sluices. Between 1890-1904, the entire Upper Anicut had to be reconstructed.

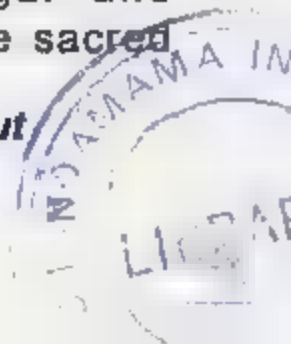
Immediately below the Grand Anicut, 6 km from the head of the delta, the Cauvery-Vennar regulators were installed in 1851, to control the supply among the main distributaries. These are, besides the Vennar, the Vadavar, Kannanar,

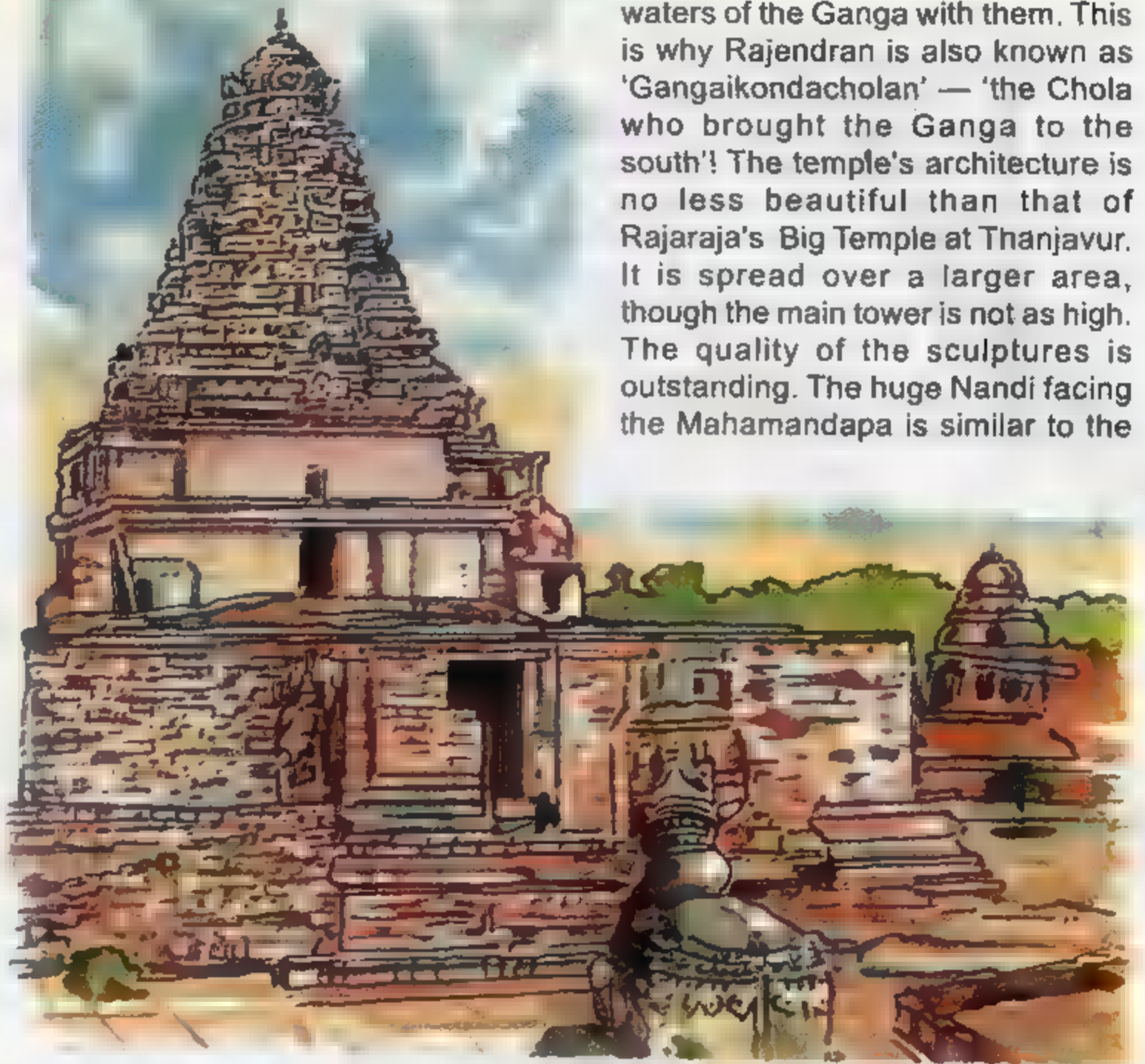


Bamani, Kudaramutti and the Arasalar. These rivers form the immensely fertile Kaveri delta in the district of Thanjavur.

North of the Grand Anicut is Gangakondacholapuram, the ancient capital of Rajendran, the son of Rajaraja Chola. He built a magnificent Brihadeeswara temple and installed a 3.9 m-high *shivalingam* in the sanctum, the biggest in South India. He wanted to commemorate his military victories in the north. His troops had marched right upto Bengal and brought the sacred

Grand Anicut





waters of the Ganga with them. This is why Rajendran is also known as 'Gangaikondacholan' — 'the Chola who brought the Ganga to the south'! The temple's architecture is no less beautiful than that of Rajaraja's Big Temple at Thanjavur. It is spread over a larger area, though the main tower is not as high. The quality of the sculptures is outstanding. The huge Nandi facing the Mahamandapa is similar to the

Gangaikondacholapuram temple

one in Thanjavur. For reasons unknown, the city was abandoned after some time.

Over succeeding centuries, the temple fell into neglect. When the new dam across the Coleroon was being built, the British engineers used the stones from the temple wall.

The entire Thanjavur delta was once known as 'Cholamandalam' such was the influence of the Cholas in the region. Thanjavur city became the capital of the Cholas only in the 9th century A.D when Vijayalaya Chola annexed it. The Cholas had once been the ruling dynasty in the Kaveri delta during the Sangam age. Now, under Vijayalaya and after him, his son Aditya, the Cholas once again came into their own. They founded one of the most powerful empires in South India, that lasted well into the 13th century.

Out of the ten great Gurus of the Sikhs, three were born in April: Guru Angad on 23 April 1504, Guru Arjan Dev on 14 April 1563, and Guru Tegh Bahadur (see picture) on 12 April 1621.

As we all know, the Sikh faith was launched by Guru Nanak (1469-1538). When it was time for him to leave his body, it was necessary for him to nominate one of his disciples to lead the community. Among his followers were his two sons. But Guru Nanak was above any personal attachment to anybody. He chose Angad who, in his judgement, was wiser than everybody else.

Indeed, Guru Angad proved to be a leader and preceptor of high quality.

Guru Arjan Dev, the fifth Guru, was the son of Ramdas, the fourth Guru. It was Arjan Dev who compiled the *Adi Granth*, the holy book, by compiling verses composed by the Gurus who had preceded him. The *Adi Granth* also includes words from the masters of the Hindu faith.

The Mughal Prince Khusru, who

BORN

THIS MONTH

revolted against his father, Emperor Jahangir, was given some help by the Guru. The Guru did so not to encourage Khusru's political ambition, but out of pity for the prince who was

in great difficulty. But the Guru's gesture angered Jahangir and the Guru was put to death.

Guru Tegh Bahadur, the ninth Guru, incurred the wrath of Emperor Aurangzeb because he protested against the Emperor's

cruelty towards the Brahmins of Kashmir. Aurangzeb called him for a discussion and the Guru readily agreed. But Aurangzeb had no patience; he imprisoned the Guru and, killed him brutally.

This was the turning point in the history of the Sikhs. Guru Tegh Bahadur's son, the brave Govind Singh, inspired the community to wage a relentless war against the Mughal ruler's tyranny.

THE THREE ILLUSTRIOUS GURUS



Myself and My World

MANY FACES OF TRUTH

A youth once had a grown-up friend as his companion. Both were on their way to the destination.

The youth was humble and he let the older man talk and act like his guardian. The older man lost an opportunity to impart advice to him.

They spent a night in a roadside inn. While relaxing on the verandah, they heard the inn-keeper tell his servant: "Kill that fowl. It does not lay eggs any more."

"Did you hear that, my boy? One must be useful in order to survive in this world," the older man told the young

The young man nodded, but made no comment.

Next day, the two were passing through a forest. A timber merchant's workers were felling trees. When one of the labourers raised his axe to cut down a particular tree, the merchant stopped him. "Don't waste your energy on it. That tree is absolutely useless."

The young man looked at his older



companion, smiled, and said: "Sir, I thank you for all the advice you've given me. I'll say only one thing. We can never be rigid about anything. Am I right?"

The older man nodded. Soon thereafter they reached their destination and there was no opportunity for him to give him any more advice.

Indeed, many of our problems and causes for conflict arise out of our rigid attitude towards things and issues. No doubt, there is what can be called an ultimate Truth, but at the mental plane, we can see only one aspect of a truth at a time. Those who can expand their minds must at least appreciate the other aspects of a truth. Such a liberal attitude itself can bring us much peace.



As two logs, while floating in the ocean, sometimes come together for a while and then part again, so do people come together and then go their different ways.

- Hitopadesh



LET US KNOW

✱ **What is an atomic clock? Do we have such a clock in India?**

— *Jyoti Bhaskar, Anantapur*

All time-keeping devices, like watches and clocks, are expected to show the same time. Most of them may not, because they will not have the same kind of precision instruments despite the claim of their manufacturers. However, atomic clocks achieve near accuracy, because they may lose not more than one second in some 200,000 years! They make such precise measurements of time. An atomic clock makes use of the vibration of atoms or molecules, unlike quartz crystals in quartz watches or a coiled spring in mechanical watches. Atomic clocks are nowadays based on cesium atoms. The National Physical Laboratory in New Delhi has an atomic clock.

✱ **I have a remote control for my TV set; but I don't know how it works. Please explain.**

— *Vidyasagar Mehta, Bangalore*

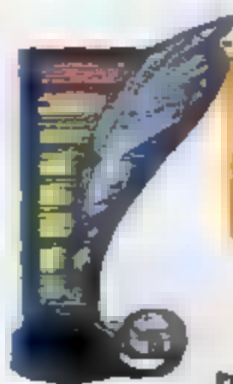
A remote control helps us operate a system from a distance. Such a device is common for TV and VCR sets. We also hear of terrorists planting explosive devices and triggering them off by using a remote control located far away, some 100 km or more. Signals are sent by the command unit (the remote control in your hand) to the operating system (TV). These signals are mostly infrared, radio waves, lasers, or ultrasonic waves. There are no mechanical arms. The remote control sends infrared pulses — used for TVs and VCRs. A small-sized receiver in the set decodes the signals and activates the appropriate operation.

✱ **What causes allergy?**

— *Kakodkar, Panaji*



Can you believe that fruits can cause allergy? Some children avoid bananas, some others do not eat mangoes! Some children avoid groundnuts or cashewnuts; it is a pity they cannot eat chocolates with nuts! This condition is known as allergy, which simply means antipathy or hatred. Can any child resist the temptation of eating chocolate? Some children are susceptible to allergy when they fondle cats or dogs. The symptom of allergy is generally rashes. Certain items have a substance called allergen. When the body comes in contact with allergen, the result is allergy. Everyone may not react to allergen in a particular item.



INDIA

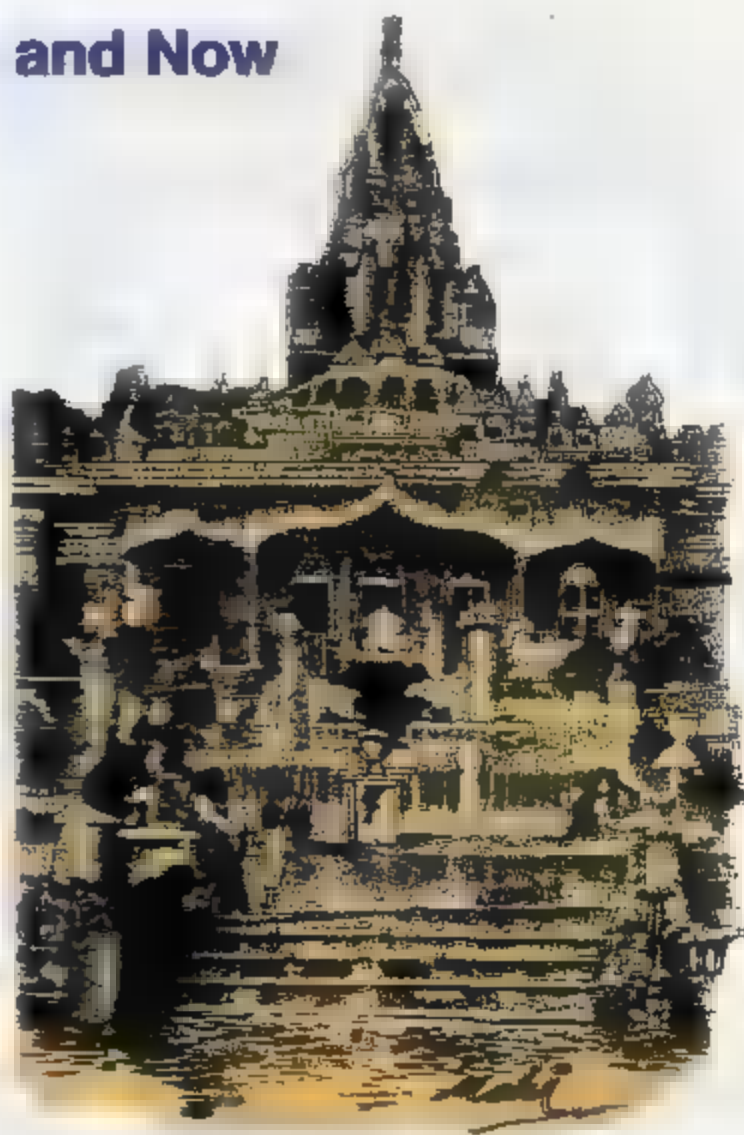
Then and Now

CALCUTTA **THE FIRST CAPITAL** **OF BRITISH** **INDIA**

Calcutta or Kolkata? It was decided to change the former to the latter only recently. But does that bring about any change in the meaning of the city's name? No, because Calcutta and Kolkata are different only by their pronunciations while the meaning of the name remains shrouded in mystery.

On the 9th of November 1698, a landlord named Sabarna Roy Chowdhury sold three villages to the East India Company, a team of English merchants who wished to trade with India. The three villages were Kalighat, Sutanati, and Govindpur. The man who bought them on behalf of the Company was Job Charnock. The cluster of villages somehow came to be known as Calcutta. It could have been derived from Kalighat – as that was perhaps the most prominent among the three villages because it housed an ancient temple dedicated to Goddess Kali.

Charnock is considered to be the founder of the city. He once led away with him a young widow who was going



Kali Temple

to burn herself alive on her husband's funeral pyre, and married her! His tomb is still in the city.

Situated on the banks of the river Ganga, which is known in Calcutta as the Hooghly, the place grew as a town rather fast. Rudyard Kipling described it as a "chance-directed, chance-erected city". The East India Company began building a fort here, which was completed in 1716. Next year, the Company was given the right by the Mughal emperor to carry on its trading activities in Bengal with this fort as the centre. It became famous as Fort William.

But do traders need a fort? Only rulers need it. Soon the traders' company began buying zamindaris and conquering territories, employing regular armies.

A big conflict arose between the Nawab of Bengal, Siraj-ud-daulah, and the Company. The Nawab defeated the Company's army in 1756 and took over Calcutta from them. But the very next year, under the leadership of Clive, the company's army reconquered the city. The two powers soon met at Plassey in a vicious battle. Siraj was defeated and killed soon thereafter. By 1772, the Company had gained enough territories for appointing a governor-general over them. The first man to occupy this position was Warren Hastings, in 1772. He governed from Fort William. Calcutta continued to be the capital of British India even after the Company occupied the greater part of India. It was only in 1912 that the capital was shifted to Delhi.

Calcutta continues to be the Capital

of West Bengal or Banga.

The oldest institution in old Calcutta is the temple at Kalighat. Here the deity was worshipped even when the area was a forest. There are other great temples, like Pareshnath, a beautiful Jain shrine, the shrine of Madanmohan, and churches going back to centuries, like the Armenian Church and St. Paul's Cathedral. Other monuments and institutions include the Saheed Minar, Victoria Memorial Museum, and the birthplace of poet Rabindranath, apart from several universities and centres of art and culture. It is the only city where electric trams ply. India's first planetarium was also founded here in 1962. In 1997, Calcutta got India's first Science City.

The district of Calcutta, comprising the main city, has a population of over 44 lakh, and Howrah, which is the twin city, has a population of over 38 lakh. A part of the district known as the 24 Parganas also is generally looked upon as part of greater Calcutta.



Victoria Memorial



Answers to March Quiz

1. Thiruvalluvar and Vasuki
2. a) Dhritarashtra married Gandhari, the princess of Gandhara.
b) Savitri married Satyavan, the prince of Salva.
c) Sahadeva's mother, Madri, was the princess of Madradesa.
d) Karna was made the king of Anga.
e) Babruvahan was Arjuna's son by Chitrangada, the princess of Manalur which is believed to have been the ancient name of Manipur.
3. i) Kathasaritsagara
ii) Dharanagari
iii) Bhasa
iv) Bhartrihari, the poet of *Shringarasatakam*, *Nitisatakam*, and *Vairagyasatakam*.
v) Uttarakunda.

Note: 1. None of the entries for the January Quiz was either all correct or complete.

2. In some cases, the comment on the quotations was missing.

3. Participants are requested to follow the rules stipulated along with the Quiz to have their entries considered for prizes.

Creative Contests

CHANDAMAMA INVITES ITS READERS

to participate in creative exercises of their imaginative-ness and quest in the following fields.

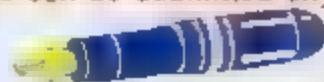


PHOTO CAPTION CONTEST

1. For the Photo-caption contest page, budding photographers can send a pair of pictures, both related to each other in way. The photographer's own explanation of the relationship must accompany the submission.

For the selected photographs (pair),
the reward is Rs. 500.

Photos can be submitted any time.



2. Readers can submit anecdote or an experience of their own or a story (old or new) which will explain a proverb or phrase announced by your magazine, in 150-175 words. Please remember that your submission must have story element in it, but not the original story from which the proverb is derived.

The proverb for this month is:
"Evil begets evil"

For the selected submission, reward of
Rs. 500 will be given.

Submissions must reach by the end of April 2000 and the winning piece will be published in the June 2000 issue.

Address your entries to:

CHANDAMAMA CREATIVE CONTESTS,
CHANDAMAMA BUILDING, VADAPALANI, CHENNAI-600 026.

COULD A WHOLE LAKE BE LIFTED TO THE HILL-TOPS?

It is "the most remarkable body of water in the world" that nestles in the lofty mountains above the clouds! Called Lake Titicaca, it is situated 12,507ft above sea level in the Altiplano, high plain, sometimes described as the roof of the world, on the border between Peru and Bolivia in the Andes range in South America. It is the highest navigable lake 125 miles long and 35 miles wide, spanning 3,200 sq. miles. Its average depth is 100 ft which plunges to even 1,000 ft at places. The water is very fresh but numbly cold, the temperature being just above freezing point for a great part of the year, though never low enough to form ice.

The atmosphere is deficient of oxygen. As a result, campfires are not warm enough, lamps and candles do burn but meekly with all their brightness gone. Water boils at 189 degrees and to cook an egg it takes twice as long as down on the coast. Engines are difficult to start and a plane requires a two-mile run to get airborne. The bread dough inflates like a balloon, as the air pressure is only 8 lb per sq. inch, compared to 15 at sea level. The soil is too barren for seeds to sprout.

"When I finally made the trip to the lake," writes Alan Landsburg, "I realised how

hostile the environment was. As soon as I stepped out on to the Altiplano my heart raced, blood pounded in my ears, I felt unpleasantly light-headed – as if gravity itself had weakened – and the dry rarefied air burnt my nose and throat."

In the Aymara dialect prevalent in the region, the word Titicaca literally means "stone of the jaguar". One wonders why the name of a wild cat was given to this frigid mass of water! According to scholars, it seems a jaguar god was worshipped at many places in these mountains and the lake was probably a ceremonial spot. But when a keen archaeologist, familiar with the locality, saw pictures of Lake Titicaca taken from space by the US astronauts while orbiting the earth from an altitude of 170

miles, he exclaimed: "I see the jaguar!" Indeed the outline of the lake does resemble the bas-relief of a puma with outstretched paws and open jaws pouncing on a fleeing hare represented by a small body of water adjacent to it. In the remote past, could the ancient people



have seen the lake from outer space to name it so aptly?

Lake Titicaca is surrounded by ■■■■ puzzling mysteries that have bewildered man since time immemorial. This great mass of water is situated thousands of feet above sea level and yet millions and millions of fossilised sea-shells are found scattered all over the place. Where did they all come from? The sea could not have surely risen so high! Or could it be that once upon a time the lake was at sea level and gradually had come up to its present altitude?

Down the ages this great "interior sea" on the roof-top of the world has undergone several drastic changes. The lake's dimension and shoreline appear to have fluctuated to a large extent. On the surrounding terrain is visible ■■ ancient shoreline which puzzlingly does not run on the same level but slopes down from one direction to the other. Geological surveys state that at the northern-most end, the shoreline is 295ft higher than the lake itself. Then some 400 miles farther south, it is 274ft lower than the level of Titicaca at present. Scientists conclude that indeed this vast plateau is slowly rising, but in an uneven manner.

It is presumed that the great ancient

city of Tiahuanaco was once a flourishing port right on the shore of Lake Titicaca. Under the water of the lake was discovered "a man-made wall of massive blocks, fitted together by some process still unexplainable today." This wall standing at right angle points towards the city. Astoundingly, the ruins of Tiahuanaco exist 12 miles south of the lake and around 100 ft higher than the present shore-level. What could have happened is, since the city was built, either the land on which its remains now stand has risen or the level of the lake has fallen considerably.

In the very remote past, perhaps much before the advent of the human race, more than ■ hundred million years ago, could it be that an extraordinary, geological event had taken place on this earth? The immense plateau, the Altiplano, cradling the sea of water, Lake Titicaca, gradually rose from the floor of the ocean to the present staggering height! Indeed, it does sound like a science fiction, isn't it?

Alan Landsburg thus vividly describes how he felt when he visited Lake Titicaca: "We never really adjusted to its hostile climate. We had nausea, headaches. I sweated in the sun, but

there was a deadly cold and continual flutter of air in my ears; I shivered in the heat. My high blue daze gave me eerie imaginings that this was a land of sealed buried sorcerers, of miracles lost in time."



Towards Better English



NOTHING QUESTIONABLE

Revathi Huilgol, ■ student of a women's college in Belgaum and Secretary of the Economics Association, called on the Chairman of a bank to invite him to the anniversary of the Association. He thanked her for the invitation, but said, his participation in the function was just *out of the question*. He did not elaborate as he was in a hurry to keep an appointment.

Reader Revathi wonders what he meant by that expression. The doubt arose because the gentleman mentioned 'question'. He could have merely said he was not in a position to accept the invitation (probably he had prior commitments). Perhaps he meant that it was impractical to discuss the possibility of his attendance, by changing the date or the time for holding the function to suit his convenience.

Incidentally, the word 'question' used in phrases and idioms assumes different meanings. If you say 'that is not the question', it means the topic is irrelevant. 'The book in question' simply means the book being referred to or under discussion. Someone's honesty is 'beyond question' will mean that no one need have any doubts about that person's honesty. We often hear of 'it is a question of time' – something will happen, if not now or immediately, at least ■ a later date, but happen it will. Any more 'questions', Revathi?

What is the meaning of the idiom 'ring a bell'? asks Gowrishankar of Gobichettipalem.

During conversation, if someone were to ask you whether you have heard of a particular name, you might say it 'sounds' familiar or 'rings a bell' – both meaning the same.

Ramabhadran Nedungadi, of Kodungallur, Kerala, wants to know the meaning of the idiom 'to bang one's head against a brick wall'.

Suppose reader Nedungadi meets his old-time friend Aravindan who, between the last time they met and now, has put on a lot of weight and looks flabby and uncouth, he will naturally take pity on him and advise him to go on a diet and make it a point to take regular exercises. And if they were to meet more frequently and Nedungadi finds no change in his friend, and sees him eat more than one cup of ice-cream every time they visit a restaurant, he might remark: "I'm only banging my head against a brick wall", to indicate that all his efforts to help his friend had been in vain. Poor Nedungadi, he is only trying to *get* (something) *into* (someone's) *head*, which is another 'heady' idiom.

WORLD TODAY

THE WORLD BOOK FAIR

The modern world is full of dramatic events. If there is a war somewhere, somewhere else a government is toppled by an army commander. Massacres and kidnaps are daily news.

But our calendar is not marked by such disturbing events alone. There are great events of another category. They are good and creative. They also change or influence the lives of many, but without making much noise.

Such an event was the World Book Fair which took place in New Delhi from the 5th till the 13th of February. The venue was Pragati Maidan, a vast ground reserved for giant fairs and exhibitions. The Prime Minister, Shri Atal Behari Vajpayee, inaugurated it and Dr. Murli Manohar Joshi, our Minister for Human Resources Development, spoke on the occasion.

This grand event, the first one in the new millennium, was the 14th in the line of World Book Fairs in India. While the first World Book Fair took place way back in 1972, with 224 Indian and foreign participants (publishers and book-sellers), the last fair consisted of 1,200 participants, occupying an area of 29,000 square metres, housed in nine large pavilions.

What is important, the theme of this year's fair was children's literature. The best of children's books, both from India and abroad, were tastefully displayed in a pavilion exclusively devoted to it. Thousands of children felt thrilled going through the Fair and their parents also learnt about the knowledge and joy that can be brought to the young through books.

On display was something unique on this occasion. It was the world's longest newspaper (or magazine), all



written by children. Prose and poetry written by the children of all the States of India as well as pictures drawn by them found place in this wall magazine, spread zigzag over a large area of the Fair.

The National Centre for Children's Literature (a wing of the National Book Trust) also organized a seminar on the problems of children's literature, in which so many distinguished writers, editors, educators, and illustrators, including several delegates from abroad, participated. For the inaugural function, while the chief guest was Ruskin Bond, the keynote address was delivered by Manoj Das. It so happens that both of them are the editorial advisers of your magazine.

Yes, you will be happy to know that your magazine, too, had put up a stall there. The display of *Chandamama* in 12 languages – something unique in the world of publications – impressed the numerous visitors. The young ones

HEARD AT THE WORLD BOOK FAIR

- Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee asserted that books shall not only weather the onslaught of the IT revolution, but will harmonize with it to grow stronger.
- Minister of Human Resources Development, Dr. Murali Manohar Joshi, spoke of the need to provide affordable, good quality books to a large potential readership in the rural areas.
- NBT Chairman, Dr. Sitakant Mahapatra, said despite technological challenges, books shall continue to transcribe and transform reality.
- Jnanpith Award Winner Dr. C. Varayana Reddy hailed books as the respository of knowledge.

found the live and moving characters – the chimpanzee and the doggy – fascinating.

In spite of the fact that television, internet, etc, have claimed a heavy share of the reading time of people, books continue to be the most popular medium for gathering knowledge, wisdom, and joy. You are all familiar with the popular saying that a man is known by the companion he keeps. This was slightly amended by an American writer to: "A man is known by the company his mind keeps".

Only a good book can be good company for our minds.



DISCOVER, EXPRESS YOURSELF

Answers to the quiz published in this issue will appear in the next issue. Meanwhile you are welcome to send your answers to Discovery of India Quiz, Chandamama Buildings, Vadapalani, Chennai - 600 026. But to qualify as ■ contestant, you must also do an imaginative exercise: please read all the quotes and fillers (which appear on several pages) in the March 2000 issue and tell ■ which one (give only the page no.) appealed to you most and why. Please do not ■ more than a hundred words to say this. Please write your age, the name of the educational institution, and your class if you are a student, and your full address. Put down your signature below your answer and let it be certified by one of your parents or teachers.

1st Prize : Rs. 1000

2nd Prize : Rs. 500

Plus five
Congratulatory prizes
of Rs.200 each



1. It was a dark night. Not a soul was to be seen in the streets of the city. In the cremation ground on the holy river a few pyres were burning.

A weeping woman held close to her breast the body of her child and reached the cremation ground all alone. She must pay a fee for cremating her

child. The fee was to be collected by the watchman of the cremation ground on behalf of his employer.

But the woman had no money to pay. So the watchman would not allow her to perform the rites without the fee. But suddenly the watchman recognised the woman. She was none other than his wife; the child was none other than his son.

Who was this watchman and who was the woman? Where was the cremation ground?



How are the following pairs of mythological characters and places related to each other?



Chandamama: one spirit in many languages.

AND BAG A REWARD



- i. Which is the ancient work to describe the glory of the sea-side city, Pumpuhar?
- ii. Who is the author believed to have travelled all over India collecting stories, in the remote past?
- iii. In which ancient work do we find the legend of Savitri and Satyavan?
- iv. Who are the two great poets to popularise the *Ramayana* in Tamil and Hindi?
- v. Which ancient Indian philosopher was a famous atheist?



MAY I HAVE YOUR
ATTENTION
PLEASE!

CONDITIONS :

* Employees of Chandamama India Ltd. and their families/associates are not allowed to participate.

* The judges' decision will be final and no correspondence will be entertained in this regard.

* Illegible entries cannot be considered.

* The results will be published in the July 2000 issue of Chandamama.

* Answers should reach us on or before 30th April 2000.

- | | | |
|---------------|---|--------------------|
| a. Krishna | – | Vidarbha |
| b. Balabhadra | – | Kusasthali |
| c. Nala | – | Nisadha |
| d. Markandeya | – | Pushpabhadratirtha |
| e. Guha | – | Sringiverapura |

the spirit of light and delight



PHOTO CAPTION CONTEST

Can you formulate a caption in a few words, to suit these pictures related to each other? You may write it on an ordinary post card and mail it to



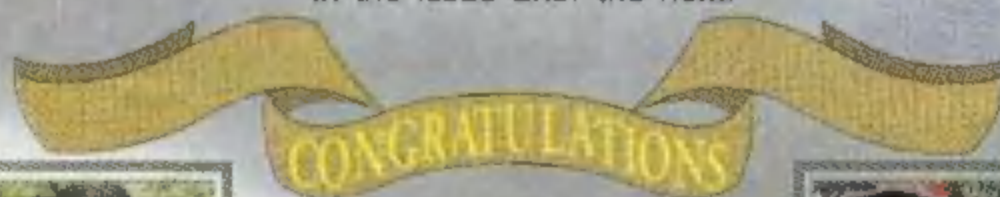
PHOTO CAPTION
CONTEST

CHANDAMAMA

Vadapalani
Chennai-600 026



to reach us by the 25th of the current month. A reward of Rs. 100/- will go to the best entry which will be published in the issue after the next.



The Prize for the
February 2000 contest goes to :

M. USHA

c/o M. Bhaskar Rao
Ram Nagar, Near Fire Station
Chatrapur - 761 020
Orissa



The winning entry :

"The pride of the forest"-"The pride of the family"

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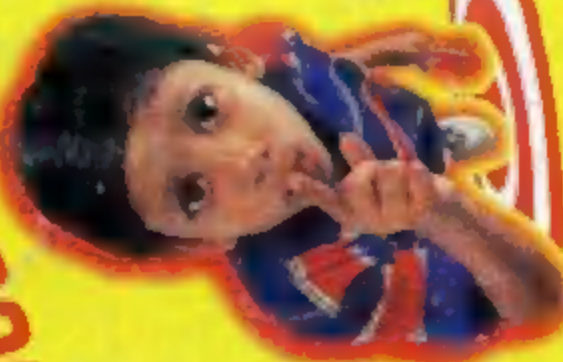


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